

SHAKESPEARE ON SOUTH AFRICAN TELEVISION

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Submitted in accordance with the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts  
in the English Department at the University of Cape Town

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February 1992

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the financial assistance provided by the Human Sciences Research Council. The conclusions arrived at in this thesis are not, however, to be regarded in any way as a reflection on the H.S.R.C. I am also grateful to the Postgraduate Student Fund, administered by Research Administration at the University of Cape Town.

It is unlikely that this thesis would have been written at all without Nick Visser. His guidance and encouragement predate its inception, and his steady enthusiasm made the wearisome miles seem less so.

I am happy to acknowledge the many people involved in broadcasting, television and theatre production in South Africa who so graciously gave me their time and co-operation. These include Hendrik Aucamp, Mary Berry, Penny Charteris, Dirk de Villiers, Keith Grenville, Paul Kemp, Robin Knox-Grant, Sandra Kotzé, Socks Kubheka, Ken Leach, Jimmy MacGowan, Cor Nortjé, Clive Rodel, John Rogers, Roy Sargeant, Richard Steinmann, Murray Steyn, Richard Strauss, Daan van Vuuren and Stephanus Venter. In particular, Douglas Bristow, Lindyll Roberts, and Ronnie Wilson were most helpful.

I should also like to record my thanks to David Schalkwyk, who was a wonderful babysitter; Tim Couzens, who made me take myself seriously; Ian Glenn, whose support allowed me two good long trips to Auckland Park; André Brink, Guy Butler, Ian Ferguson, Johan Muller and John van Zyl, who generously gave me their time and professional insights; Anton Welman and Chris Fourie, who managed to provide the last piece of the puzzle just when I'd given up hope; Stephen Heyns of *The Weekly Mail*, and Julian Doyle, who ferreted around for me in the Transvaal when I couldn't; Stephen Erlank, who introduced me to the world of word processing and stayed on stand-by; and Jane Gill, Kate Miller, Helen Collins, Michael Munro and Tess Kreuz, who helped in all sorts of important ways.

My mother and grandmother gave me their loving support, as ever.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father, Hans Rudolf Kreuz, and of my grandmother, Helène Henschos Kreuz.

## ABSTRACT

This study undertakes the analysis of the eight productions of Shakespeare that were produced for television by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) between 1977 and 1988. The plays that were selected for production are Much Ado About Nothing (1977) Macbeth (1980) Twelfth Night (1981), A Midsummer Night's Dream (1982), Hamlet (1983), and The Merchant of Venice (1987). The SABC has also televised two stage productions by performing arts councils; these are Romeo en Juliet (1982) and The Winter's Tale (1988).

The approach I have taken is a cultural materialist one. The television productions are analysed within the context of the SABC as a social, political and cultural institution, whose policies and practices are in turn shaped by the wider national political, economic and social context.

The cultural role of the SABC is a dominant one, not least because of its monopoly over South African broadcasting until 1986. Its perception of its role and function is based on the passive "mirror" theory of media communication whereby "reality" is simply reflected within the operations and by the products of radio and television. In contrast, my approach to broadcast media incorporates the view that a broadcasting institution has a mutually active relationship with the community it addresses itself to, that this relationship undergoes change through historical development,

and that its products engage with their audience as it engages with them; they are as much informed as informing.

In exploring the conditions of production of the SABC's television Shakespeares, I have undertaken to interview as many people as possible involved in their production. Analysis of their approach to the production of Shakespearean drama in South Africa combined with (semiotic) analysis of the message of production leads to an interpretation of the ideological reference of these productions.

I conclude that the eight television productions of Shakespeare (separately and together) reinforce the traditional idealist attitudes towards Shakespeare instilled by critical orthodoxy. To a large extent, these attitudes are maintained by the educational, theatrical, and popular cultural background which produces the "Shakespeare myth" in South Africa.

## PREFACE

This thesis relies extensively on material from interviews and letters. A personal or a telephonic interview or a personal letter will be referenced as such in the bibliography and, in the case of a single interview or letter from one person, will not be referenced in the body of the thesis. When I quote someone with whom I have had more than one interview or received one letter, the source (and date, where necessary) will be referenced in the text.

I would be happy to make the transcripts of the interviews and copies of the letters from which I draw my conclusions available to any interested researchers.

The style of documentation I have used is that set out in Nicholas Visser's Handbook for Writers of Essays and Theses.

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## INTRODUCTION

There is occasions and causes why and wherefore  
in all things

Henry V

This study is concerned with two institutions that function prominently in South African society, both of which operate at more than one level of signification: the South African Broadcasting Corporation, and Shakespeare. The former is an official institution, its existence, policies and practices sanctioned by the government. It has enjoyed almost exclusive broadcasting rights in South Africa since the 1920s. Television was introduced in this country on a partial or trial basis in May 1975, and full broadcasting began in January 1976. South African television rapidly became, as in other countries, a dominant and persuasive cultural medium.

The second institution -- Shakespeare -- is of a different and yet equally powerful and pervasive nature. The plays that William Shakespeare wrote in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have survived the past four hundred years and, today, reach a larger audience than their author could ever have imagined. Above and beyond the texts themselves, however, the dramatic works have come to acquire meaning and value at ideological levels, thereby locating the works and their author within contemporary political and cultural discourse.

The focus of this study is the connection between these two institutions: the selection and production of Shakespeare's plays for television by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). Since 1976, the SABC has purchased productions from Britain, America and Germany for local television broadcast, usually with the original English soundtrack, although it seems possible that at least one play has been dubbed into Afrikaans.<sup>1</sup> Apart from the overseas productions, however, the SABC has produced eight Shakespeare plays of its own since 1977, two of which are televised versions of stage productions by state-funded performing arts councils.

The list below includes both local and foreign productions screened on South African television (see Appendix for full details).

April	1976	<u>Hamlet</u> (FDR?)
October	1977	<u>Much Ado About Nothing</u> (SA)
October	1978	<u>Othello</u> (GB)
September	1980	<u>Macbeth</u> (SA)
October	1981	<u>Romeo and Juliet</u> (GB/Italy)
October	1981	<u>Twelfth Night</u> (SA)
June	1982	<u>Romeo en Juliet</u> (SA)
October	1982	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> (SA)
November	1983	<u>Hamlet</u> (SA)
February	1985	<u>The Taming of the Shrew</u> (GB)
July	1986	<u>The Tempest</u> (USA)
October	1986	<u>Julius Caesar</u> (USA)
April	1987	<u>The Merchant of Venice</u> (SA)
August	1988	<u>The Winter's Tale</u> (SA)
February	1990	<u>King Lear</u> (GB)
November	1991	<u>The Taming of the Shrew</u> (GB/Italy)

Although the SABC's productions were originally made for broadcast, seven of them have now been released on video and, through an independent marketing and distribution company,

have been available for purchase since May 1990 through national retail outlets such as Dion's, Pick 'n Pay Hypermarkets, Macro and Central News Agencies.

The ways in which the institutions of the SABC and Shakespeare inform each other stem from historically- and culturally-determined beliefs and practices, and this interaction needs to be viewed in the light of other institutions and cultural practices through which many South Africans have been and continue to be familiar with Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's work forms an integral part of the syllabuses of educational institutions in South Africa, with particular but not sole emphasis in "white" schools.<sup>2</sup> In both government-run and private schools, pupils are introduced to two of his plays and much of his poetry at junior secondary level, and at least another two plays in their senior secondary years. For 1992 and 1993, for instance, the Cape Education Department has set A Midsummer Night's Dream for Std 6, Romeo and Juliet for Std 7, The Merchant of Venice for Std 8 (Higher Grade), The Tempest for Std 8 (Standard Grade), Hamlet for Std 10 (Higher Grade), and Antony and Cleopatra for Stds 9 and 10 (Standard Grade). Naturally, Shakespeare also continues to play a crucial role in tertiary academic institutions.

There has been no shortage of Shakespeare on South African stages, either: Hamlet was first performed in 1799 at Fort Frederick in Port Elizabeth by British troops in occupation of the Cape (Wright and Gubb, p. 1), and the

tradition has continued and flourished. Today, theatre-goers are well-catered for by the four provincial performing arts councils, each of which produces at least one Shakespeare play every year. Recent examples are the 1988 production of The Winter's Tale by the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (PACT); the 1989 production of Kinkels in die Kabel, André Brink's Afrikaans translation of The Comedy of Errors, as well as Much Ado About Nothing by the Performing Arts Council of the Cape (CAPAB); and PACT's Macbeth and CAPAB's Richard II in 1990. In all urban centres, independent, civic and university-controlled theatres frequently stage Shakespeare productions. In addition, the open-air theatres at Maynardville in Cape Town and Mannville in Port Elizabeth have staged a production of Shakespeare every summer since 1956 and 1960 respectively; the former also boasts a statue of the celebrated playwright which stands watch over the audience.

British, European and American film and television Shakespeare productions are available for hire on video at public libraries and commercial video outlets throughout the country, and many of the better-known cinematic productions have been screened on the major film circuits. The commercial success of Kenneth Branagh's recent production of Henry V and Franco Zefferelli's Hamlet suggests that South African audiences are not opposed to being entertained by Shakespeare.

For literary-minded individuals and organisations, the Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa was established in

1985 in Grahamstown under the auspices of Rhodes University, the 1820 Settler Foundation, and the Institute for the Study of English in Africa. According to its Constitution, membership is offered to any person or body wishing to "encourage and stimulate the appreciation of William Shakespeare's works in Southern Africa". The Society's bias in favour of the tenets of traditional critical orthodoxy is revealed in the inaugural speech given by a British academic, M.M. Mahood, who claimed that "the gentle Shakespeare", who was apparently concerned chiefly with a-political and uplifting matters in his work, "knew that his plays could speak to the condition of men in future times and in distant places" (pp. 7, 8; my emphasis). The Shakespeare Society is responsible for publishing newsletters, an annual journal, Shakespeare in Southern Africa, and, in 1990, a more "user-friendly" text of Romeo and Juliet specifically geared towards schoolchildren whose first language is not English.

Apart from Shakespeare in Southern Africa, other local literary journals as well as overseas publications frequently publish articles on Shakespeare by South African academics, and, in 1987, Martin Orkin of the University of the Witwatersrand published his book, Shakespeare Against Apartheid. As the title's association with popular political rhetoric suggests, the work represents an attempt to move away from the conventional, idealist approaches to Shakespeare which appear to have characterised much of South African teaching and scholarship to date. Orkin's central thesis is that traditional Anglo-American critical practices

reinforce the class and racial divisions within South African society due to their emphasis on the "natural order of things", such as social hierarchies, and racial or religious discrimination.

Developed from a combination of alternative theoretical approaches (although with a leaning towards cultural materialism), Orkin's readings of Othello, Hamlet and King Lear against the specific historical, political and cultural background of South Africa have thrown previously unquestioned attitudes and assumptions, and their attendant problems, into relief and highlighted the need for review in a local context.

The advertising medium in South Africa has also not neglected Shakespeare: South African Airways has been equated with timeless value, tradition and solidity by association with Richard II, and Spar Supermarkets, Ferreira's Hardware Supplies and M-Net pay-channel television have made use of popularised characters or familiar comic scenes to promote their products or services. A Hamlet in full Elizabethan costume promoting bargain-price dog-food is funny -- and, the advertiser hopes -- arresting, because of the incongruousness of the situation.

This (interwoven) academic, theatrical, and popular cultural context presumably bears a strong resemblance to that found in most countries where English is spoken. What becomes clear, as John Collick points out, is that Shakespeare is not simply a specific body of literary texts: "the name denotes a broad area of cultural practice and

meaning which encompasses film, art, theatre, literature, education and history" (p. 8). Any form of reproduction is, therefore, "not a hermetically enclosed work ...[but]... the sum of a number of discourses culled from these various areas of production".

The institution of Shakespeare in South Africa is carefully maintained and pervasive, and his work has been made to function powerfully in various sectors of South African society as a sign of authority and legitimacy for those who appropriate it. That South Africa's only national broadcasting institution should choose to produce eight Shakespeare plays of its own for television, at great expense and at a very early stage of its development, needs to be questioned. An understanding of their historical and cultural context and the conditions of their production requires some knowledge of the history of television broadcasting in South Africa, and of the development of the SABC as a dominant cultural institution.

Although the SABC began operating in the 1920s and, in 1936, was established as a public institution by Act of Parliament,<sup>3</sup> for forty years it was restricted to radio services, and it was only as recently as 1976 that a television service was put into full operation. The reasons for the delay were overtly political: the right-wing Afrikaner Nationalist government resisted the introduction of television, not so much on the grounds that the additional

knowledge of the world that it offered would incite blacks into revolution against the apartheid system, but rather because it was feared that its influence would undermine the morals, language and culture of Afrikaner society. Afrikaner ideology, upheld by church, educational system and the authority of the family, might not be able to withstand television's potentially subversive power. This, in essence, was the view of Dr Albert Hertzog, Minister of Posts and Telegraphs from 1958 until 1969. The "undisputed champion" of the anti-television cause, Hertzog warned of the evils of television, calling it "the Devil's box" (quoted in Philpott, p. 2), and cautioning how "the effect of wrong pictures on children, the less developed and other races can be destructive" (quoted in Corrigan, p. 15).<sup>4</sup>

By the late 1960s, however, the government was under pressure to revise its position on the television issue, both from English-speaking sectors and, to a large extent, from an increasingly urbanised and middle-class Afrikaner social sector.<sup>5</sup> That official recommendations in favour of the introduction of television to South Africa were based as much on political considerations as was the government's initial mistrust of the medium is evidenced in the 1971 Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Matters Relating to Television. The commission proclaimed that the threat of a "hostile power" initiating political intervention in South Africa by means of "international political and technical developments", which included the possibility that "television programmes broadcast via satellites could be



picked up direct by the public in South Africa", could only effectively be resisted by a national, fully-fledged television service of its own (Report, p. 1). It is also possible that the Nationalist government considered that the introduction of television under its aegis might gain itself extra support at the polls.

The Report of the Commission, led by Dr P.J. Meyer, chairman of the Board of Control of the SABC and, simultaneously, chairman of the Broederbond,<sup>6</sup> has been highly influential in the inception and development of television in South Africa. It showed itself to be most sensitive to right-wing fears about television's subversive potentialities and went out of its way to alleviate them on two counts.

First, it demonstrated that television could be used in the interests of maintaining Nationalist ideology: the introduction of the service was recommended on the basis that it would continue to give preference to "national interests" in the same way that the radio services had, and, since the service should also fall under "some suitable form" of government control (p. 6), there would be little chance that it could do otherwise. Indeed, the Commission had been directed in its undertaking to bear in mind the "principle" that a possible television service "will have to be a cultural service with strict control over programmes" (p. vi, my emphasis). Television broadcasting would adopt the established political bias of the SABC's radio programme policy, linked as it was, in the words of Douglas Fuchs, SABC Director-General in 1969, to "national policy ... [and] based

on recognition of the diversity of language groups" (quoted in Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 'Between Policy and Practice', p. 89), thereby furthering the interests of Afrikaner nationalism and the policy of apartheid. As Dr Jan Schutte, the SABC's Deputy Director-General, stated four years later during the television test-programming stages, "It's not a secret how the SABC operates.... It is as it has been over all the years. It hasn't changed at all" (quoted in Financial Mail, 'Your Mind in Their Hands', p. 17).<sup>7</sup>

Second, the Commission attempted to assuage the fears of conservative politicians about the corruption of the morality of the country's youth, as well as those anxieties voiced by the heads of the entertainment and publishing industries about possible loss of income,<sup>8</sup> with the comforting conviction that

television could never be a substitute for the convincing directness of the spoken word in the classroom, from the pulpit, the political platform, or anywhere else. It could never take the place of the printed word in books, magazines, or newspapers which can be read and reread; it could never supplant our ever-present companion, the radio; it would also be a poor substitute for the film which is watched by deeply involved massed audiences. Television can only combine these things to a greater or lesser extent very compactly into a different means of communication with its own character and its own limitations.  
(Report, p. 9).

A third significant aspect of the Commission's Report relates to its understanding of the process and nature of televisual communication. Television, as "one of the ways in

which human beings communicate ... as well as their youngest mode of communication", is portrayed as a seemingly natural extension of normal human communication. Thus, if communication between people is "essentially a fourfold process embracing entertainment, information, enculturation and creative enrichment of the mind", and which is "as a whole ... a process of education and instruction" (p. 8), television can be understood as having a similar didactic function. Clearly, this definition has been carried over into the practical philosophy of the SABC's television service, whereby the 1987 Annual Report states that "it takes into account the wishes and needs of the various language and cultural groups in South Africa in order to inform, educate and entertain them constructively" (p. 1). These principles are also based on a definition of communication via television as a one-way process only, with those in control able to decide where to draw the line between that which is "constructive" and that which isn't.

Furthermore, the Meyer Report goes on to suggest that communication between human beings results in "shared thinking, doing and feeling" as well as implying "mental, spiritual and physical affinity" (p. 8). Since, by the Commission's own association, televisual communication is a natural continuation of this process, it is clear that the medium of television as controlled by the SABC was understood to be capable of performing a unifying function within (supposedly) separate social communities -- an important

concept for state policy based on the division of the population according to imposed ethnic boundaries.

At this point it is important to stress that the notion that a broadcasting institution and its products can have a unifying influence on the community is not restricted to South Africa or authoritarian government control. William Maley has pointed out that the BBC, for instance, "consistently promotes the illusion of a unified and integrated political region with a system of common values and beliefs. Its very existence perpetuates this myth" (quoted in Holderness, 'Boxing the Bard', p. 175). The crucial distinction between the BBC and the SABC in this regard would be that, while the former promotes unity across social groups, the latter concentrates on promoting unity within but difference between supposedly distinct social groups, in accordance with government policy.

At the social and cultural levels, television could be "an indispensable, irreplaceable medium for enculturation" because, as

a positive growth factor, [it] can have a powerful influence and effect on community life in so far as it upholds the accepted norms, values and standards of the community in its programme policy and is positive in reflecting and strengthening these things in its programmes

(Meyer Report, p. 12).

Thus, as far as cultural politics is concerned, the programmes broadcast by a television service (if in the right hands) could play a large role in reinforcing the ideological position of the community, where "community" is to be read as

being synonymous with the dominant order. Only if a society allowed television to function outside and above its system of beliefs and values would it expose that society's "moral fibre and morale" to forces over which it has no control (p. 11). It was made ominously clear from the very beginning that television broadcasting in South Africa would toe the line as far as the political ideology of the government was concerned, and that society per se would have little opportunity to voice its preferences as to what it would and wouldn't like to see on its television screens.

Finally, the Meyer Report reveals an attempt to camouflage the issue of the ideological significance of technology itself:

The employment of the various communication media in the system of communication of a developing country is a practical matter and not a matter of principle. The medium as such has no moral or philosophical character or content

(p. 10).

As Crankshaw, Williams and Hayman have pointed out, the "content and the technology of manufacture and distribution are inextricably interlocked in an ideological matrix that is related to the characteristics of the audience as perceived by those controlling broadcasting" (p. 27).<sup>9</sup>

On the basis of the Meyer Commission's recommendations, the government in 1971 granted the SABC the power to begin the implementation of the new service, which was envisaged as being financially self-sufficient. This was ostensibly so as not to increase the burden on the "white taxpayers", but also

to prevent the possibility of future opposition from competition: if South Africa's only television service was subsidised by the government, then it was considered likely that pressure would arise for the establishment of "parallel commercial television services on a profit-making basis, which would be ... extremely detrimental to South Africa and its people", (Meyer Report, p. 56). Whether deliberate or not, SABC-TV's financial independence would have enhanced an image of it as being wholly autonomous, a concept reinforced by the Director-General of the SABC, Jan Swanepoel, in 1975, when he said that "[w]e are an independent organisation. We are not dictated to by the government. We have never been asked, since I've been here, by anyone in government to do a programme on this or that. The moment we allow ourselves to be talked into that, we would be slipping" (quoted in Financial Mail, 'Your Mind in Their Hands', p. 17).

In spite of Swanepoel's claims and against the Commission's recommendations, however, the government was obliged to offer financial assistance to the SABC because the costs of establishing the new service were so high. Even though television was to be introduced in phases, and notwithstanding an estimated saving of eight million rand due to the establishment of a country-wide frequency-modulation network after 1960, which had been designed with extra space for television transmitting sites and aerials (Meyer Report, p. 1), the SABC still needed thirty-four million rand in 1971 to cover the costs of erecting a satellite ground station and operating expenses, and by 1975 running costs for SABC-TV

were estimated at 106 million rand (Financial Mail, 'Your Mind in Their Hands', p. 18). According to Swanepoel, the corporation would have preferred to have been financially independent and to have accepted the government subsidy only as an interim measure for the first two years of television broadcasting, after which it would be able to derive a substantial income from television advertising fees (Financial Mail, p. 17).

The connections between the government and early television broadcasting in South Africa were not covert: the SABC may not have publicly advertised itself or its television service as being under direct state control, but the fact remains that it was only empowered to implement this service by means of statute and state finance. The Broadcasting Act of 1976, which repealed the 1936 Act, was passed to accommodate the Corporation's new service and, by detailing rules to which broadcasting practices must adhere, it serves to reinforce the conditional nature of the existence of television in South Africa. In addition, the SABC's board of directors, responsible for all matters of policy, is comprised of five to fifteen members who were and to this day continue to be appointed only with the approval of the State President.

On 1 January 1976, after eight months of test programmes, the SABC's first television channel went into operation. It was officially opened four days later by the State President, Mr B.J. Vorster, who admitted that he had not been "over-enthusiastic about the introduction of

television", but that he had been "pleasantly surprised" by what he had seen so far (quoted in Fraser, p. 27610). He claimed that, while other countries may use television "to give a slanted and distorted picture of news events", local television would reveal South Africa to the world "as she is".

Initially, the new channel (TV1) broadcast for five hours every evening. In accordance with the Meyer Commission's recommendation to introduce television in phases, this first phase was a combined service "for Whites", to be presented in English and Afrikaans "with completely equal treatment of the two languages", (Report, p. 19). Consequently, two discrete programming divisions had to be established within SABC-TV, each to concern itself with programme broadcasts in one official language only. Since the SABC would be able to buy overseas programmes with English soundtracks whereas Afrikaans programmes would either have to be produced locally or dubbed, and as neither the government nor the SABC wanted Afrikaans television to be overshadowed by its English counterpart, the Afrikaans Department was, at least initially, given a much higher budget to work with (Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 'Between Policy and Practice', p. 129). This did not mean, however, that SABC-TV sought to support English television primarily with overseas material: its aim was to produce up to fifty per cent of its programmes locally, with Dr Schutte claiming that "SABC-TV has no intention of gorging itself on international material" (quoted in Financial Mail, 'Your Mind in Their Hands', p.



20). No doubt it was considered important for SABC-TV to show that it was capable of "putting on its own show" without an over-dependency on the products of more experienced overseas television producers, but Schutte's avowal was also a most convenient one in the light of the boycott of the SABC by the International Federation of Actors, Equity, and most of the other affiliated actors' unions around the world. The consequence of this was that the SABC had an extremely limited range of overseas television programmes available for purchase.

The SABC's decision to restrict TV1 to broadcasts in English and Afrikaans, predominantly the home-languages of the "white" South African population, evidenced its assumption that audiences would be comprised mainly of whites, at least initially. In 1976, when the population of South Africa numbered approximately 25,500,000, with approximately 4,500,000 registered as "white",<sup>10</sup> the number of television licences sold amounted to 715,000. Although the SABC does not calculate the number of licences held by "individual race groups" (van Vuuren, Personal Letter), it was apparently safe for it to assume in the early years of television broadcasting that the majority of its licence holders would be white, for economic and ultimately political reasons: a minority of urban blacks and even fewer in rural areas had access to electricity, and the majority of those who did could little afford to buy a television set and pay the licence fee.

That section of the South African television audience which was black and middle-class was not to be specifically catered for until 1982 when a second channel, TV2/3, began broadcasting in Xhosa, Zulu, South Sotho, North Sotho and Tswana;<sup>11</sup> the SABC estimated that, at this time, nearly 600,000 black adults were tuning in to television (Financial Mail, 'Into the Future', p. 10).

The SABC's motivation for the establishment of TV2/3 was expressed almost as an act of altruism, and phrased in the language of paternalistic superiority. For instance, Professor Wynand Mouton, SABC chairman in 1982, claimed that television viewers actually preferred separate language broadcasts (in Financial Mail, 'Into the Future', p. 5), and, according to an article in South African Panorama,

[t]elevision in their own languages opens doors to the whole world for Black men and women. At the same time, it enables other population groups -- Whites, Asians and Coloureds -- to glimpse something of the lifestyle, traditions and habits of Blacks. The result is better human relations between the races, and better mutual understanding (Groenewald, p. 21).

It is also worth quoting at length from a report by D.H. Mills, director of the SABC's technical services during the early stages of television, if only to illustrate more fully the nature of the assumptions made about black audiences by those in charge of production:

It may appear that as we move into the second phase which is for two channels for the black section of the population that this would be easy and merely an extension of the first phase. This is very far from the truth, since we are dealing

with a highly talented section of the population with very little written history, literature and theatre in their background but with tremendous ability to communicate and entertain. The challenge of the second phase would be the adaptation of modern technology to make the best use of the programme potential that is latent in this section of the population, and in particular not to introduce bad habits and non-productive practices from an allegedly more civilised section of the population

(Mills, p. 37).

TV1 offered its viewers a selection of programmes ranging from news, commentaries, documentaries, drama, religion, sport, and magazine and children's programmes, but its restricted broadcasting time (roughly thirty-five hours per week) meant that the selection was narrow. Furthermore, the technical quality of many of the locally-made programmes made it only too obvious that South African television was still finding its feet, despite the SABC's oft-heard claim that its late appearance benefited from "everyone else's experience" (Mills, p. 37).<sup>12</sup> Apart from these operational criticisms which, to be fair, could presumably have been levelled at any recently-established television service, the news and magazine programmes that appeared on South African television screens were overtly biased in favour of state policy to the extent that, as John van Zyl notes, they "propagated the more extreme and conservative aspects of it" ('SATV: What Kind of Service?', p. 17).<sup>13</sup>

As far as drama was concerned, the Afrikaans department managed to produce, in van Zyl's opinion, "some excellent (if innocuous) material", whereas the English drama department "maintained an effete, fin de siècle, art-for-art's sake

attitude to its productions" (p. 16).<sup>14</sup> Colin Pocock, reporting on the constant increase in sales of television sets in South Africa during 1980, found it difficult to believe that the reason for this was due to a high standard of broadcasting: "Such is the quality of the SABC's more recent offerings that all but the most infirm can hardly be persuaded to remain indoors -- even for prime time" (p. 205).

SABC-TV seemed to have fallen very far short of the fantastic potential promoted by the publicity campaign surrounding its introduction. One advertisement of note, appearing in the Financial Mail in March 1975 consisted of an low-angle shot of the newly-erected Television Tower in Auckland Park, Johannesburg, which thus appears to reach the sky, in which there is a television camera with "SABC TV" printed on it in block capitals. The advert's ambitious caption, from Tennyson's Locksley Hall, reinforces rather than underplays the weaknesses of the new television service:

I dipped into the Future, far as human eye could see,  
Saw the Vision of the World, and all the wonder that  
would be...

The adverse criticism was so strong, in fact, that as early as 1980 at least one South African critic argued in favour of the decentralisation of broadcasting and the establishment of independent regional broadcasting stations which, he suggested, would recognise the needs of "different communities" and cater to them far more effectively than the SABC could (van Zyl, 'SATV: What Kind of Service?', p. 17). Within a year, the Report of the Steyn Commission of Inquiry

into the Mass Media made it very clear that decentralisation of broadcasting was the reverse of the changes that the country's rulers had in mind. In suggesting that "autonomy and independence is essential to preserve the SABC's credibility" (p. 132, my emphasis), the Report reveals either that it is genuinely ignorant of or deliberately oblivious to the strong public criticism which alleged that the corporation had no credibility to preserve. The Report did not directly address the Commission's concern with the issue of media control and legitimacy, but that the State recognised the inherent contradiction between the two concepts is suggested by legislation passed in the wake of the Inquiry.<sup>15</sup>

During 1982 and 1983, SABC-TV expanded its services and the second television channel was again split, with the new TV4 operating off the TV2/3 frequencies daily between 6.00pm and 7.00pm, and after 9.30pm. This latest channel, which purported to be a "multicultural entertainment and sports service" (SABC Publications, p. 11), offered similar fare to TV1 and was also aimed at predominantly English- and Afrikaans-speaking viewers. In 1989, TV4's hours of broadcasting were extended, thereby taking a greater chunk out of the black-language services of TV2/3. These developments were clearly in line with the SABC's perception of its "task", which, according to Riaan Eksteen, SABC Director-General from 1984, was to establish a "particular programme culture, which respects the property rights of the different groups in the country" ('Die Rol van die SAUK',

p. 133).

In 1986, Subscription Television (STV) was established in South Africa.<sup>16</sup> The channel, M-Net (Electronic Media Network), is owned by a consortium of newspaper proprietors and carried an initial investment of eighty million rand.<sup>17</sup> The new service was awarded its twenty-year broadcasting licence by the government in spite of the risk that the SABC would suffer a loss of advertising revenue. The SABC, however, attempted to cover its losses in advance by entering into an agreement with STV, whereby the corporation received thirty per cent of STV's shares in exchange for thirty percent of TV4's advertising revenue. Two significant aspects of this situation are, first, that it marks the alliance of the English press with the SABC (Tomaselli and Tomaselli, 'Change and Continuity', p. 20) and, second, that two of M-Net's four major cartel members are owners of pro-government newspapers, which might explain why the government was in favour of STV and why it has continued to grant M-Net broadcasting concessions.

The establishment of M-Net was also in disregard of both the Meyer Commission's warning in 1971 about the adverse effects on society of a commercial television service, as well as the warning issued by Mr I.S.W. Burger, the SABC's Senior-Director of the News and External Services, whereby a commercial service was thought likely to "resort to the baser forms of entertainment: bloodthirsty violence, nudity and sexuality" as a result of accepting viewer statistics as its sole criterion (Burger, p. 134). It was also thought that

programme standards and quality would suffer to the extent that news broadcasts would become "superficial" and, until very recently, the SABC retained its monopoly on news, public affairs and magazine programmes, in line with its "responsibilities" as the national broadcaster (p. 134).<sup>18</sup>

The initial agreement between the SABC and M-Net allowed for the allocation of a 57-minute section to M-Net every day on the SABC's TV4 channel between 6.00pm and 7.00pm from 1 July 1987 to 31 December 1988, or until M-Net had 150 000 subscribers. In its encoded broadcasting hours, M-Net screened mainly films, soap operas and other entertainment genres, but within a few months of its inception, its Managing Director estimated that it was attracting over 1,2 million viewers for its "open time" slot, and had 27,000 subscribers (Finance Week, 'Spin-offs', p. 226). M-Net's advertising revenue was estimated at being worth over two million rand a month, income that would otherwise have gone mostly to the SABC. To make up the shortfall, television licence fees were substantially increased, thereby obliging the public to help meet the cost of competition.

In the SABC's favour, however, the cost of a television licence was still considerably lower than that of buying an M-Net decoder and subscribing to the service on a monthly basis. The corporation's concerns about the threat of competition to its television services as well as the loss of advertising revenue created by the establishment of M-Net were not reflected by its public face. It claimed to have no

apprehensions about its future status in the region, as its "Vision" shows:

The SABC will be dominant in a new electronic-media structure in Southern Africa. It will be successful in attaining this position through a quality product and a well-developed strategic management capability

(Annual Report, 1987, p. 9).

Between 1976 and 1988, television audiences showed a growth rate of 184% (according to SABC figures), with the total number of television licence holders exceeding two million. By 1988, the estimated total television audience numbered 7,7 million (Annual Report, 1987, p. 9). As the population of South Africa at that time was approximately thirty million,<sup>19</sup> a rough estimate would suggest that some twenty-three per cent of South Africans were watching national television (excluding those viewers who owned a television set but not a licence).

The SABC's financial situation had undergone considerable changes since it had had to accept annual government subsidies during and after 1974. The corporation had not been dependent on the government for the operating costs of its television service since 1981, but it experienced massive financial losses in 1985, mainly as a result of the minute increase in income from advertising revenue and license fees (Annual Report, 1985, p. 5). The consequences of these losses affected the operation of SABC-TV until 1988. By 1989, the corporation claimed to derive



22% of its income from licence fees and 75% from the sale of advertising air-time on television and radio.

Although the SABC has achieved economic independence from the state government, strong connections remain between the two which go beyond the fact of legislation. Ideologically, the broadcasting corporation is aligned with government policy to the extent that its mission statement claims to "disseminate a positive message about South Africa and its people" and its "Philosophy", with specific reference to "Community Responsibility", states that

The SABC accepts responsibility towards each population group in South Africa and will further the causes of harmony and co-operation in all its programme services and will provide no platform for incitement to confrontation, revolution, violence and disorder

(Annual Report, 1987, p. 1)

Furthermore, the SABC's board of directors and its executive committee have, over the years, consistently demonstrated an overwhelming faith in the management capabilities of white males. Ten of the eleven members of the (all-male) 1989 Board, for example, were white, and at least five of those are or were members of the Afrikaner Broederbond.<sup>20</sup>

It is, in consequence, scarcely surprising that the SABC has been perceived historically as functioning from its highest level, if not as a direct arm of Government, then at least as an advocate of identical, inherently conservative, political interests. Like other institutions, it has been affected by changes and developments in South Africa since

the 1930s but, for the most part, the result seems to have been a closer (albeit complex) connection to the State.

Very recent political and social reforms at the national level have had a direct impact on the policies and practices of television broadcasting, the implications of which will be addressed in the concluding chapter of this study.

My analysis of television texts is based on a broad cultural materialist perspective, and draws on the foundations of the "new" British cultural studies as established by Raymond Williams and developed by, among others, Stuart Hall, Jonathan Dollimore, Alan Sinfield and Graham Holderness. It attempts to trace the ways in which broadcasting practices in South Africa function to defend, confirm and perpetuate the dominant socio-political order. Of central concern is the relation of these practices to the nature and ideological role of the institution which produces them, itself shaped by the pressures of the wider political and economic context of the country.

The attempt to explain the incorporative or assimilatory function of a formal institution, while necessitating consideration of its historical development and ideological position, must also be aware that such a (hegemonic) process is, in practice, "full of contradictions and unresolved conflicts" (Williams, Marxism and Literature, p. 118). Consequently, the products of an institution -- in this case, the eight local productions of Shakespeare's plays -- are

sites "on which varying meanings and effects may be produced according to the determinations within which the work is inscribed -- determinations which are never single and given but plural and contested, locked in relations of struggle" (Bennett, 'Text and History', p. 235).

This notion of struggle or conflict is crucial, not only for an understanding of the operations both within and between formal and informal institutions, but also for a comprehensive definition of the concepts of ideology and culture. If ideological processes are those which determine "the way we live", then the inherent contradictions within various signifying systems have to affect both the subjective or "lived" experience of culture as well as the conclusions to be drawn from a more objective critique of it.

I am concerned with the study of "culture" in its sense as the first of Hall's two paradigms outlined in his paper, 'Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms'. The definition incorporates the totalising interactionism between the practices, meanings, traditions and values produced by social groups on the basis of their historical conditions and ideological positioning, which in turn enable them to respond to their conditions of existence. Assigning key roles to the humanistic concepts of consciousness and experience, Hall shows that, while without active social engagement people would be unable to mobilise against and transform the conditions of their lives, too much emphasis on this fact tends to "override the awareness ... that, in capitalist relations, men and women are placed and positioned in

relations which constitute them as agents" (p. 39). In other words, allowing for the possibility of change refuses the probability of the determinism that a crude materialism would consider to be inherent within any social system. As Williams sees it, the consequences of a determinist theory are necessarily reductive, in that no cultural practice is taken to be significant in itself, but "is always reduced to an ... expression of some preceding and controlling economic content" (Marxism and Literature, p. 83).

In Radical Tragedy, Dollimore focuses on the literary and theatrical production of Renaissance drama, but his description of the theoretical premises underlying his work has resonance for the study of all forms of cultural texts:

the materialist conception of subjectivity ... aims not only to challenge all those forms of literary criticism premised on the residual categories of essentialist humanism and idealist culture but, even more importantly, invites a positive and explicit engagement with the historical, social and political realities of which both literature and criticism are inextricably a part

(pp. 249-250).\*

Within this framework, the analysis of television texts is more profitably illuminating.

The international history and current role of the medium of television suggest that its social and political influence has not yet reached its furthest bound. One of its more considerable strengths is its ability to familiarise, to the extent that television can be seen as "more than a product; it is a work, a work whose function it is to naturalise the social, the cultural, the product of class division, so that

it seems to be 'the way things are'" (Skirrow, p. 30). Different programme genres manage this using different techniques, of course, but the fundamental issue to be tackled in an analysis of any genre or programme relates to the ownership and control of the broadcasting institution behind that media production.

I have tried to show how the political economy of the SABC has been yoked throughout its history to political and economic developments at the national level.<sup>21</sup> The institution's dominant cultural position -- affected though not seriously threatened by recent competition -- is largely due to the power of the government behind it, which was and continues to be responsible for its establishment and constitution. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer have suggested that a "technological rationale is the rationale of domination itself" (p. 350), and it would be difficult to dispute this in the case of South African broadcasting.

I do not intend, however, to posit the notion of the SABC as, in Hans Enzenberger's phrase, a "monolithic consciousness industry", which would, as he says, derive from an undialectical and obsolete view of the mass media in general (p. 16). Observing the (unarticulated) theoretical viewpoint behind the Meyer and Steyn Reports, the SABC's own theory of the role of broadcasting media corresponds to that of the "passive transmitter", whereby

[o]n the one hand, it is a reflection of the neutral stance implied in the concepts of objectivity and impartiality embedded in the dominant professional ideology in the media. At

the same time it is rooted in a pluralist view of society, in which the media are seen to provide a forum for contending social and political positions to parade their wares and vie for public support (Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott, p. 21).

Although the SABC has always maintained that, in the content of its broadcasting, it has given equal representation to opposing political points of view, in reality only very recent institutional developments might, at a push, allow it to legitimately claim that it is a "forum" in any way. A central concern of this study has been to take into account some of the changes that the SABC has undergone -- during the period between 1976 and the beginning of 1992, in particular -- as a result of its close connection with the National Party regime, a condition of its existence which has outweighed any other.

Opposition to alternative critical approaches to literature may wish to counter the attack on formalism or idealism by suggesting that this may have the effect of reinforcing Shakespeare's position as the greatest writer in the world rather than drawing attention away from the privileging of certain texts over others, and the privileging of literature over other cultural practices. Nigel Smith, reviewing Dollimore and Sinfield's Political Shakespeare and Drakakis's Alternative Shakespeares, makes this point in the title of his article, 'Confirming Canons', when he says that "the very act of 'appropriating' a new 'site' in the most traditional part of the canon is a compromise of the logical ends of theoretically-informed literary criticism" (p. 66). If the challenge to conventional criticism is going to be an

effective and sustained one, however, it is no doubt forced to confront the opposition on its own ground. A cultural materialist approach, furthermore, is strongly based on a sense of itself as an intervening force in contemporary ideological practice. As Dollimore says, "the very desire to disclose [the ideological process of containment] is itself oppositional and motivated by the knowledge that ... it is a process which is historically contingent and partial -- never necessary or total" ('Shakespeare, Cultural Materialism and the New Historicism', p. 15).

There is by now a relatively large body of materialist criticism which has concentrated on re-reading Renaissance drama and Shakespeare in particular within critical paradigms very different from traditional humanistic approaches. Similarly, the appropriation of Shakespeare's plays by media such as theatre, film and television has generated scrutiny which offers a great deal more than any evaluative criticism based on value-judgements and purely aesthetic concerns -- what Catherine Belsey has termed "consumerist criticism" (Critical Practice, p. 30).<sup>22</sup> The thirty-seven BBC-Timelife productions of Shakespeare have received much attention, mainly of the "review" or "consumerist" variety, although the work of critics such as Graham Holderness and John Collick in particular offers a materialist perspective on these television texts and their conditions of production. For semiotic analysis, I have drawn largely on the work of Keir Elam, John Fiske and John Hartley.

In South Africa, rigorous critical analysis of the media has tended to focus on print media and, with television broadcasting, predominantly on news and current affairs programmes. Materialist criticism is limited to a small body of work mainly constituted by Keyan Tomaselli (The Cinema of Apartheid), Tomaselli and van Zyl ('The Structuring of Popular Memory in South African Cinema and Television Texts'), and Tomaselli, Tomaselli and Muller (Currents of Power: State Broadcasting in South Africa). One local television drama series which sparked a consideration (albeit brief) of its ideological implications is 1922, analysed by Brenda Cooper and Linda Cooper.

Aside from a small number of newspaper reviews and an article by John van Zyl on the semiotics of stage-into-television production ('A Thrice-Told Tale'), the SABC's eight productions of Shakespeare seem to have been overlooked. While they do not constitute a series as such, they can be considered as a whole in that they consistently propose a similar framework for an interpretation of the plays which, in its turn, supports a particular interpretation of "Shakespeare", and, consequently, can be seen to structure audience consciousness in socially and politically consequential ways (Bennett, 'Media, Reality, Signification', p. 288).

In the preface to The Shakespeare Myth, Holderness defines the common objective of those critics who adopt a cultural materialist position as "the analysis and disclosure of those discursive formations and cultural institutions



which throw ... manifestations of the Shakespeare myth into active and strategic play, and manipulate them into some form of ideological constraint or composure" (p. xv). What this analysis is likely to reveal, Sinfield suggests, is that Shakespeare's plays and the terms of their reproduction today occupy no less complex an ideological position than they did when they were first written and produced ('Macbeth', p. 73). It is hoped that the examination of the connections between Shakespeare and national television broadcasting in South Africa will testify to this.

## CHAPTER ONE

I have done the state some service, and they know 't  
Othello

Within the space of the eleven years between 1977 and 1988, SABC-TV's two drama departments were able to improve on the technical quality of their programmes, and they had also become more ambitious in terms of the material they were willing to produce. One-off drama productions in English included South African works by Athol Fugard (People are Living There, Hello and Goodbye) and Olive Schreiner (Story of an African Farm); foreign material comprised plays by George Bernard Shaw (Arms and the Man), Jean Anouilh (Antigone), and Jean Cocteau (The Human Voice), amongst others. Of all the established playwrights, however, the one whose work was most frequently presented during this period was Shakespeare. Under three successive supervisors, the English drama team was responsible for the production of six Shakespeare plays and also for televising stage productions of Romeo en Juliet and The Winter's Tale by the Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State (PACOFs) and the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (PACT) respectively.

There are various reasons to account for SABC-TV's selection of these particular plays for presentation, as well as for the decision to produce Shakespeare itself. All, however, are backed by a common conviction on the part of those involved in the decision-making and production

processes as to the central concerns of the plays. According to Robin Knox-Grant, the SABC's general manager of television programme production, they deal primarily with "the eternal characteristics of human beings, the love, the hate, the jealousies". For Roy Sargeant, ex-head of English television drama, the plays "touch on things which are absolutely universal, they stretch across centuries, and they do it in [an] exotic fashion which creates a new enlightenment".

The intrinsic value of Shakespeare's dramatic works, then, is seen to lie in their ability to transcend the historical circumstances of their original sixteenth- and seventeenth-century context by foregrounding the workings and effects of human personality traits, which are perceived to be essential and omnipresent. Consequently, there would be no need for the makers of a television production to emphasise the psychological angle to the exclusion of other aspects (such as the political or the social), since they are understood to be, if not entirely absent, then, at best, peripheral.

This conclusion is supported by the fact that the only briefing given to directors Douglas Bristow and Ken Leach from more senior levels within the SABC was that their productions of Shakespeare "be clear -- clear in the sense that they must make sense" (Bristow, Personal Interview). This guideline presumably alludes to the old-fashioned language of the plays, considered to be something of a stumbling block for modern audiences, and which "correct" performance might be able to simplify for the benefit of

viewers. Taken further, however, and seen within the context of the SABC's conservatism and its view of itself as upholding the interests of the status quo, the implication is also that the productions were to "make sense" in terms of the way they were to be presented: a traditional humanist approach would concentrate on the personal and interpersonal problems which result from (unexplored) social disorder, rather than on the specifically political causes and effects of that disorder.

That the texts are understood as having a single and non-negotiable meaning is evident from Leach's comments about directorial discretion, whereby, he says

interpretation-wise, they rely on you to be mature about it, in the sense that if you suddenly devised a Shakespeare with everybody in the nude, I don't think it would meet with much approval.... You have to keep in mind that television comes into the home -- everybody is going to see it, so you can't be too outrageous.

In the context of the SABC's gross minimisation of the events, causes and consequences of the 1976 Soweto Riots in its radio and television reporting,<sup>1</sup> it is in fact no surprise to find that its version of Shakespeare also aims for an approach that is as apolitical and unidimensional as possible.

As is to be expected, the SABC's Shakespeare is made to function coherently within the institutional framework of its context, thereby implicitly setting up a mutual reinforcement of ideological significance between the two. As to the question of the political reference of the plays, Knox-Grant

asserts that any political facet is "also part of the universal theme", and that, in fact, they are political "only in the very broad sort of sense", while Ronnie Wilson, head of TV1 programming, says "Shakespeare is above that.... You get some avant-garde approaches but people don't usually bend the truth for their own devices".

Shakespeare, then, has been assigned a neutral position whereby the plays do not overtly or determinedly take issue with gender inequalities, for instance, or a struggle for political leadership. Instead, the texts represent a single, fixed "truth" which is not to be tampered with but understood as a reflection of "reality". That they accord with the dominant ideology is a given: just as Cor Nortjé, TV1's programme director, claims that Shakespeare is selected and produced "simply because it's there", the plays' support of concepts such as the naturalness of class hierarchies, the existence of God, and the intrinsic heroism of a brutal yet patriotic soldier is also unexplored.

Apart from the perceived objectiveness of Shakespeare's position as author and the transcendent impartiality attributed to his works, the plays have come to function at a second level of signification. The fact of producing Shakespeare confers both credit and credibility on those involved in the making of the production as well as on the production company or institution itself. This is because, within the fields of literature and drama, his work as a whole has acquired a history of glorious supremacy, and each sonnet or play is treated as a sacred product of England's

National Poet. Shakespeare represents the highest of "high culture", and the best of British in particular.

Eight television productions of Shakespeare assist in reinforcing the SABC's position as a dominant cultural institution in South Africa, a status that it has been laying claim to and trying to sustain for years. In this regard, Ronnie Wilson believes that "if you don't include Shakespeare in your drama coverage, if you only keep it to Who's the Boss?, you run the risk of losing your credibility as a production company and as a broadcaster ... because there's an audience out there that needs it". This audience would appear to be a particularly small one because Shakespeare is generally recognised by SABC-TV as being, along with classical music, opera and ballet, "minority-type viewing" (Knox-Grant). Although Knox-Grant's opinion is that, as "mass appeal theatre", Shakespeare "was the Elizabethans' answer to Dallas and Dynasty", it does not necessarily follow that contemporary South African television audiences feel the same way about it.

From a slightly different perspective, Knox-Grant, self-consciously speaking as a British subject, indicates explicitly how the association with Shakespeare as "the best of British" operates for the SABC as the national broadcaster in an post-colonial country:

Shakespeare is one of the cornerstones of English literature, it enjoys a very high priority, it's very important in the general concept of Englishness.... I think that there is an obligation not only for English-speaking people to be reminded of the important elements of our culture and of our

language, but also for us to enable our fellow countrymen [sic] to get some idea of what we are about and what our language is about and where we come from.

This statement ties in closely with one of the effects, according to Graham Holderness, of the BBC's appropriation of Shakespeare, which is seen to be "an ideological affirmation of historical continuity" ('Boxing the Bard', p. 181). This has special significance for South Africa in so far as English-speaking South Africans can lean on Shakespeare as a symbol of their origins and their past, and assimilate him as an integral part of their cultural identity. There is also a sense, however, that Shakespeare is "owned" by the English sector, that he "belongs" to them and only to them, and, as such, can be used to maintain a supposed position of superiority over other social groups.<sup>2</sup>

In Shakespeare, Cinema and Society, John Collick points out that, as far as film companies are concerned, Shakespeare's plays are not selected for production because there is a shortage of material: "There are very definite reasons for reproducing the plays and the tradition to which they belong" (p. 10). By extension, this would also relate to television production houses and, as has been shown, to the SABC in particular, where the decision to produce Shakespeare has sometimes been made, figuratively speaking, at the expense of excellent local drama and, literally, always at the expense of the broadcasting institution itself (an issue which will be discussed later in this chapter). The nature of the exchange between the SABC and Shakespeare

is a reciprocal and self-perpetuating one, whereby one cultural authority simultaneously supports and is supported by the other. As Alan Sinfield clarifies, the "presentation of Shakespeare gives television companies a varnish of high culture whilst, at the same time, confirming Shakespeare's reputation as the author who speaks to all conditions, even through the most popular medium" ('Reproductions, Interventions', p. 132).

Although the SABC has no specific policy on drama or the performing arts in general,<sup>3</sup> the selection of Shakespeare is, it claims, strongly linked to the second aim of its broader policy to "inform, educate and entertain" (Annual Report, 1976, p. 2). As far back as 1971, the then-Minister of National Education was advocating the advantages of television for education, "communication", and "culture" in general (quoted in Financial Mail, 'Money or the Box', p. 411). This is reinforced by SABC chairman Wynand Mouton in 1980, when he said that the corporation is "a cultural organisation,... an educational organisation", and, as such, is "in contact with the community it serves" (quoted in Financial Mail, 'Change and the SABC', p. 606).

The corporation sees itself, while obviously not as the leading medium for education in South Africa, at least as capable of playing a sound auxiliary role. A primary reason given for the local production of Shakespeare is to support secondary school syllabuses. On how his production of Macbeth coincided with the Transvaal Education Department's list of prescribed texts for 1980, Douglas Bristow says that



"no television company would ever do a production of that size without considering whether they would get a spin-off by encouraging matric students to watch it" (Personal Interview).

It would perhaps be reasonable to suppose that access to productions in theatrical, filmic and television performance media would greatly benefit those scholars and students who are required to study the literary texts. This is the SABC's point of view, that a visual performance makes the plays "come alive". The way that Shakespeare is usually handled in South African schools, however, with a leaning towards a single interpretation of meaning which unsurprisingly coincides with what Martin Orkin refers to as the "dominant socio-political milieu" (Shakespeare Against Apartheid, p. 10), is carried over into the way it is handled by the SABC.

The broadcasting corporation and the provincial education departments function very similarly in terms of ideological production, lending weight to Gillian Skirrow's view that the institutions of television and education strongly correspond with each other in terms of their functions, construction of meanings, and ideological positions: both assume objectivity, and presume to explain "the way things really are" (p. 25). Clive Rodel of the English television drama department at the SABC implies that they have taken cognizance of the standpoint adopted by the educational institution when he says that "after all, the conventional approach [to Shakespeare] goes down best with the educators in the country".

South African researcher David Blake, in an article which investigates the significance of television for scholars and education in general, has concluded that "television cultivates a demand for stylization and hampers the development of a genuinely critical outlook" (p. 17).<sup>4</sup> The implications of this as far as Shakespeare is concerned have direct bearing on Holderness's point about the cultural authority that institutional productions assume ('Boxing the Bard', p. 182). The structure and emphasis of the SABC-TV Shakespeare productions in conjunction with the weight of the institution behind them works to close off possible alternatives as to their meaning, thereby strengthening the notion of an established and single interpretation that a young student is not equipped to challenge.

The scheduling of these productions will be more fully considered later in this chapter. At this point, however, it is appropriate to draw attention briefly to the late-night time-slots that are allocated to the Shakespeare productions (local and overseas). The SABC's insistence on their educational value may be in direct contradiction with the fact that they are always screened after nine p.m., either on a Thursday or a Sunday: most children are not encouraged by their parents to "stay up late" on a night preceding a school day and, consequently, this would make it difficult for them to see the production. Exceptions are made, of course, and programmes can be recorded on video for later viewing (by those fortunate enough to have a VCR), but the late-night scheduling has become so established as to suggest that any

educational value these Shakespeare productions may have is secondary to other considerations.

A second and less obvious reason given for the SABC's decision to produce Shakespeare is that the corporation feels it has an obligation to afford the creative and artistic communities the chance to be involved in a production of such a nature and size. In Knox-Grant's words,

the SABC is in a sense the only supporter of a South African television industry. We have an obligation to the creative people involved in the industry, including performers, directors, technicians, and that is why on occasion we do Shakespeare.... It's the kind of thing that we feel that, as a national broadcaster, we should be doing from time to time, but not too often, perhaps once every two years.

The effect of an enhanced reputation for the SABC as a result of its appropriation of Shakespeare has been mentioned earlier, and a second and equally self-reflexive aspect of this is how the local television productions enable the corporation to realise one of the principles it has set out in its "Philosophy", which is to "utilise the creative and performing talent of artists and other contributors and stimulate the arts in this way" (Annual Report, 1985, p. 2).

The costs involved in the filming of Shakespeare's plays might make the SABC's perceived obligation to undertake them seem a relatively onerous financial burden but, from a different point of view, the productions also elevate the SABC's role as beneficent patron as well as allowing it to display "ruling-class affiliation with the best in Europe and North America" (Orkin, Drama and the South African State, p.

246). This affiliation may sometimes take on a slightly competitive edge, as when Paul Kemp, manager of English television drama, says that it is important for the corporation to produce Shakespeare "because local audiences like to see their own people and things. And I think we do Shakespeare rather well -- certainly better than the Americans".

National pride as well as a rather more creative and hands-on approach than Kemp's inspired Douglas Bristow's defensive dismissal of what he perceives to be a prevailing belief that the only "real" or "good" theatre is to be found in London and New York: "this is just absolutely not true.... I think for that reason we have to be proud of what we can do, and not be ashamed of what we can do, and it should be viewed comparatively but also on its own merits" (Personal Interview).

A third factor influencing the SABC's decision to produce Shakespeare is the cultural boycott which was imposed on South Africa by Western countries in opposition to the Nationalist Party's apartheid policy. The boycott was implemented in the early 1960s and was officially endorsed in 1969 by the General Assembly of the United Nations with Resolution 2396. Direct consequences for the SABC were that it was prohibited from purchasing much television material from overseas since members of Equity, the British actors' union which had joined the boycott, could not appear on South African television screens. Although the SABC was able to

acquire some overseas material such as drama series and one-off television dramas and documentaries via American co-production and sales rights (including older British film productions of Hamlet, Othello and, more recently, King Lear), it was precluded from buying any of the thirty-seven productions in the much-acclaimed BBC-Timelife Shakespeare series.<sup>5</sup>

Knox-Grant, among other senior personnel at the SABC, makes the point that, when the Equity ban is eventually lifted, South African television broadcasting will not be overrun with British programmes because it is believed that local audiences "have been weaned on American-style television to such an extent that the British style will be alien to us to the extent of our rejecting it".<sup>6</sup> There would, of course, be exceptions, and Shakespeare is one of them: few people at the SABC would dare to oppose what seems to be a generally-held perception that the British "do" Shakespeare best. Wilson says that "Americans will give it a certain pizzazz and tempo,... and in this country we'd probably give it another kind of charm,... but they all lack the vibrancy that the British productions have". This impression is also supported by a report in the Financial Mail of 7 October 1988, which looked to the possibility of South African audiences enjoying quality British television series after the removal of the Equity ban, and made special mention of the BBC's Shakespeares ('Beating the Ban', p. 62).

That the cultural boycott might have been a determining factor in SABC-TV's initial selection of Shakespeare was not

discussed by any of the corporation's present or former staff members during their interviews, with the exception of Murray Steyn, the executive producer for The Merchant of Venice, among other drama productions. Steyn said, "since we couldn't get the British stuff, we said, Fine, if we can't get it, we're going to do it ourselves". Two possible conclusions can be drawn from this: either SABC-TV believes it would have produced Shakespeare under its own steam anyway, or the older American and British film productions that were available were considered sufficient overseas fare as far as the field of "serious drama" or "cultural programming" was concerned.

There appear to be conflicting views about the nature of the decision-making process behind the selection of a particular Shakespeare play for television production. Wilson says that it is a judicious committee decision and not "one man's eccentricity", although he and others are vague on the subject of who actually sits on the committee. Steyn claims that there is no standard decision-making procedure at SABC-TV, and that there never has been. On the other hand, Douglas Bristow and Ken Leach, the directors of the six Shakespeare productions for which the SABC takes full creative responsibility, play down the implication that it is a collective decision and are keen to emphasize the very personal motivation behind the undertaking.

Bristow, who was employed on a permanent basis at the SABC as a producer of television drama at that time, directed the first three SABC-TV Shakespeare productions. He claims

that it was his own initiative to do Shakespeare: "it was a personal thing, it had always been my ambition from the early '60s when I became involved in the theatre" (Personal Interview). Although Bristow's dream centred on Macbeth, the first play to be selected for production was Much Ado About Nothing, which was completed and broadcast in 1977.

According to Bristow, the reasoning behind the choice of this play was that there had been some uncertainty as to how the South African public would react to a local Shakespeare on their screens; also, he says, "the idea was entertainment and we were short of comedy at the time". In a later interview, Bristow was more candid when he said that "the powers that be ... were very doubtful about Shakespeare", and that they had agreed to it "quite grudgingly" (Telephonic Interview).

A shortage of material in the "comedy" genre was also partly responsible for Bristow's decision in 1981 to produce Twelfth Night, but by 1979, two years after Much Ado About Nothing, he says that he felt "the time was right" to do Macbeth. The play was set as the drama requirement for the Transvaal matric syllabus for 1980 (the year of the production's completion), and is also considered to be one of Shakespeare's most well-known plays. Leach is explicit on the notion of perceived familiarity as a justifying factor: "you go for the Romeo and Juliets, the Macbeths, the more accessible ones.... We say, Well, which one is the most popular? Okay, let's do that one".

Also to Bristow's advantage in getting Macbeth off the ground was the fact that he had recently been awarded an

Artes for his 1979 production of Antigone.<sup>7</sup> This, together with his theatre background and previous experience in producing Shakespearean drama for television, presumably gave him some clout with SABC-TV executives, and the process from concept to final authorisation appears to have been a smooth one.

Leach, director of A Midsummer Night's Dream (1982), Hamlet (1983) and The Merchant of Venice (1987), was more fortunate in having ready-made allies at SABC-TV when it came to motivating Shakespeare productions. His cause was helped by Roy Sargeant, a past professor of drama at Rhodes University in Grahamstown and an executive member of the Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa, who held the position of manager and later head of English television drama at the SABC between 1982 and 1987. Furthermore, Leach's first two Shakespeare productions were under the headship of Ronnie Wilson, a man who, in Sargeant's words, is "devoted to the English-speaking South African's cultural heritage". In this context, even though Sargeant claims to have had total autonomy in his position, it is unlikely that his immediate supervisor would have stood in his way when it came to the choice of Shakespeare for television production.

For Sargeant, Shakespeare "was always in pride of place", and, unlike others in similar positions, he claims to have had a "vague plan" to do one of the plays on a regular although infrequent basis. Leach, like Bristow before him, stresses the importance of a special or personal motivation:



I don't care what you do with it [Shakespeare], as long as you expose the people to it. Perhaps that's what part of the drive was for us, Roy and myself, sitting in television then thinking, Well, we know it's not going to reach out to the multitudes but it may just touch a few people and if a few people become attracted to the idea, then we've achieved something.

There is an almost devotional undertone to Leach's words here, with the sense that the production and broadcasting of Shakespeare is a way of spreading the word, the undertaking of a religious mission to reform the unbelievers.

The costs associated with the television production of Shakespeare are comparatively high. According to people involved in purchasing administration and programme production at SABC-TV, not only is it approximately twenty times more expensive to produce local material than to buy overseas productions, but it is also far more costly to produce one-off dramas than a drama series of twelve or thirteen episodes. In the early years of South African television, particularly, the SABC had to find a way to meet the challenge of producing Shakespeare on as low a budget as possible.

Bristow says that, with Much Ado About Nothing in 1977, he was operating on a "shoestring budget" of between thirty and thirty-five thousand rand, and was allocated one of the smaller studios at Auckland Park instead of the largest one, Studio Five. (This was subsequently used for the next five in-studio Shakespeare productions). Studio Five was apparently in use at that time for a sixty-minute G   Korsten show.<sup>8</sup> The fact that the budget for this production was

three times that of Much Ado About Nothing (to Bristow's chagrin) might indicate the certainty with which SABC-TV expected this type of entertainment to attract a large audience, as compared to Renaissance drama.

The SABC's later productions of Shakespeare were undertaken with much more generous budgets than Much Ado had received. At no time with any of the productions was commercial underwriting or sponsorship involved, so there was no initial pressure on SABC-TV to make the productions financially profitable. Although they are now available on video, which entails a negligible profit for the SABC of seven per cent per unit sold, Stephanus Venter, head of television sales, says that the corporation "never really budgeted for making a profit on anything -- any income, even a cent, is a bonus".

A second aspect pertaining to the economic situation of the Shakespeare productions relates to their commercial viability -- or lack of it -- as generators of advertising revenue. As "minority" programmes, no-one at SABC-TV is under the illusion that Shakespeare attracts big advertisers for the slots either before or after the production is broadcast. And, even if it did, it is significant that under no circumstances would Hamlet, Macbeth or The Merchant of Venice be interrupted for commercial breaks. As Leach says,

Shakespeare has this sacrosanct-ness [sic] about it. I think that is what relates to a very conservative broadcasting service like the SABC, because it's "culture", you know, like opera.

SABC-TV only became a commercial service in 1978, two years after television began. For the first few years, advertisers were unable to select a particular time-slot for their adverts, and a fixed rate-setting system was used. Relatively recent changes in advertising policy, however, based on demand-driven rate-setting systems, have resulted in a more profitable service (Annual Report, 1987, p. 12).<sup>9</sup> That Leach's view about Shakespeare's "sacrosanct-ness" may still hold true, though, is suggested by Wilson when he claimed, in 1990, that SABC-TV

wouldn't interrupt the play and put on a commercial. We would do that for movies, but I don't think we would do it with something as dignified as Shakespeare, even if it was a raucous comedy. It's kind of untouchable.

Apart from its apparent lack of appeal for all but a very small section of South African television audiences, Shakespeare's inability to attract advertisers is directly linked to programme scheduling, which includes the selection, placement and coordination of programmes. It has become something of a tradition at SABC-TV to screen drama, opera and classical music concerts on Thursdays and Sundays after nine p.m., and the reason offered for this now established practice is a practical one. Thursday, Friday, Saturday and, more recently, Sunday evenings, are open-ended time-slots and, as Shakespeare and other dramatic productions are usually much longer than other programmes, they don't, according to Paul Kemp, have a place anywhere else in the schedule.

The question therefore arises as to whether late Thursday and Sunday evening are bad times per se for audience and therefore advertiser appeal, irrespective of the type of programmes broadcast, or whether it is the nature of the programmes themselves which determines audience size. To strengthen the possibility of the former explanation, Murray Steyn, among others, has stressed that, whatever programmes are broadcast during the prime-time slot of six to eight p.m., only these ever make the top ten ratings, "because that's when people are watching, so you can put on something really bad, but because it's in prime-time it'll work".

If, then, Shakespeare is "bad for business", and since SABC-TV now relies for most of its income on advertising revenue, it would make financial sense to screen Shakespeare during prime-time when viewers will already be switched on, and to keep programmes with higher ratings for the Sunday-night slots. Knox-Grant has pointed out that Sunday night is top entertainment time for television in America and other overseas countries, but "there are all sorts of reasons why that doesn't happen here".

Pertaining to this, Leach comments on how SABC-TV's Sunday-night viewing has come to constitute "culture", and its consequent association with being "the nearest thing to the church service". A further aspect of the issue of the traditional time-slot allocated to Shakespeare productions is that, as Nick Browne has noted, the schedule can determine not only the form of a particular programme but can also condition its relation to the audience (p. 588). There is

no doubt that Shakespeare is treated by the SABC with a great deal of reverence, and its predominantly-Sunday scheduling reinforces the near-religious attitude with which it is treated, and which is passed on to television viewers and non-viewers alike.

Finally, there is the subject of audience. The SABC has a small though well-established department for Audience and Listener Research, headed by Dr Daan van Vuuren, which has the reputation for being a relatively independent division within the corporation. The audience size or appreciation levels pertaining to a particular programme are only researched at the specific request of the department responsible for it. Van Vuuren says that, although the size of his team would prevent them from researching all programmes broadcast on SABC-TV, whether self-produced or not, there are very few departments who request this type of analysis at all. Furthermore, according to him, drama production is a traditionally problematic area in this respect, and he claims that this is a typical and international situation. The reasons for this are vague, but he intimated that the problem lies with the people working in the television drama departments themselves (Personal Interview). Van Vuuren believes that his is one of the few broadcasting research divisions in the world to have succeeded in making contact with drama people and to have obtained permission from them to test some of their products, although this, he says, is a recent breakthrough.

The Shakespeare productions, consequently, were undertaken with very little, if any, concrete information as to the nature or size of audience that would be watching them. A possible exception to this might have been the 1988 SABC/PACT production of The Winter's Tale: during a personal interview van Vuuren claimed to have research results on this production but, in a letter written two months later, said that he had in fact no information whatsoever. Some feedback is received in the form of letters and phone calls from viewers, but this gives no indication as to the number of viewers of a particular production, nor is it representative of the viewing population. Consequently, those involved in the production of Shakespeare at SABC-TV can only hypothesize as to who watches, how many, why, and what they think about it.

Knox-Grant, Leach, Sargeant and others agree that a Shakespeare-viewer profile would probably be white, English-speaking, in the upper-income group, and with some form of tertiary education, although Knox-Grant emphasizes that these are "sweeping generalisations". Sargeant also believes that "the Afrikaans-speaker loves Shakespeare", and Bristow has said that

every year [he] was constantly astonished by who does watch: the immediate assumption is that ordinary Joe Soap will only watch Loving or Dallas and will hate anything that even smells of culture, you know, or that is a bit more serious perhaps -- just not true

(Personal Interview).

Apart from scholars and students who have an obvious reason for watching Shakespeare (if they stay up late enough), why other viewers do is another cause for speculation. Sargeant is of the opinion that there are only two reasons: first, because Shakespeare "is a very, very fine dramatist", and second, because "it's there on the box, you know -- they'll watch practically anything". A line is drawn between those who consciously decide what to watch on television, based on the merit or interest-value of the programme, and those who watch television simply for the sake of it. Of course, if productions of Shakespeare did manage to "pull" more of each of these viewer-extremes, as Sargeant suggests, they would not have earned themselves the label of being "minority" programmes, which, according to SABC-TV personnel, applies not only to the local versions but to British and American productions as well. Lending credence to this is the fact that none of the SABC productions have been broadcast more than once, a not unusual occurrence with other local drama productions.<sup>10</sup> As Knox-Grant acknowledges, there are no restrictions to doing this because the SABC holds the copyright. The actors would be paid a percentage of their original fee on re-screening, but that, he says, "is a minor consideration". Clearly, Shakespeare is not as highly esteemed by television audiences as it is by those who reproduce it.

Leach feels that the reason for Shakespeare's lack of popularity lies in

the general perception ... that it's old, it's esoteric, the language is impenetrable in the sense that it's difficult to understand, and there are very often misapprehensions as to what it's about.

If this is true, the problem may well lie in the way in which the production of Shakespeare for South African television has been approached and presented. If there is a future for Shakespeare on SABC-TV, its producers might consider the example of the American PBS series, The Shakespeare Hour, whose producers were not only on a "cultural" mission but also aimed to "demystify" Shakespeare (Charney, 'Televisory Shakespeare', p. 491). Bristow, in agreeing with Leach about the barrier presented by the language of the plays as well as their commonly perceived complexity, unwittingly helps to perpetuate these notions when he says that he "tried to keep [his] productions of Shakespeare so that nobody seeing it for the first time will be totally baffled by something totally strange and not immediately evident" (Personal Interview).

It seems reasonable to conclude that the SABC-TV productions of Shakespeare were not motivated by commercial interests, even though the corporation has to function as a viable business concern like any other profit organisation. That the productions were considered to be of major cultural importance (so much so that they were undertaken in spite of economic constraints) is, however, in part, a contradiction of the wider trend within drama and entertainment production to de-Anglicise South Africa, and promote Afrikaner culture. As mentioned earlier, the SABC's Afrikaans television drama



department was allocated a much higher budget to work with than the English drama section, but the productions of Shakespeare (only one of which was in Afrikaans) indicate at the very least an ambivalence about cultural equality, and disclose one aspect of the corporation's intrinsic heterogeneity.

One area in which English- and Afrikaans-speaking executives and production staff are in accord -- as well as those who speak Xhosa and Zulu (to be discussed later) -- relates to the conservative approach and reverential attitude towards Shakespeare. The general acceptance of received ideas about the plays and their meaning lends weight to the assertion made by Tomaselli and Tomaselli, whereby the "chief mechanism by which the ideological content of television is secured is through the appointment of individuals who are able to identify themselves as subjects of the dominant ideology" ('Between Policy and Practice', p. 113).

There is, it appears, no need to imagine a conscious hidden political agenda behind the decision to produce specific Shakespeare plays for television. For the directors, the production of any one of them is the fulfilment of a personal ambition; for the SABC, Shakespeare bestows prestige and credibility. Nevertheless, whether it is acknowledged or not, Shakespeare -- as much a central component of English culture in South Africa as of British culture -- has

inevitably been incorporated into the dominant ideology and made an instrument of hegemony. The

plays ... are filtered, and sometimes quite transformed, to represent a class position that accords with an elitist notion of culture and a ruling-class view of the world

(Margolies, p. 43).

Discussing film and television productions of Shakespeare, Graham Holderness has suggested that, while the undertaking to adapt Shakespeare for a medium other than the literary is potentially radical, this prospect is "in practice systematically blocked, suppressed or marginalised by the conservatism of the dominant cultural institutions ('Radical Potentiality and Institutional Closure', p. 199). The SABC is no less conservative than any that Holderness has in mind, and the significance of its productions of Shakespeare will be seen to reside not only in the meanings which they generate, but also in the story they tell about the nature and development of television drama in South Africa.

## CHAPTER TWO

What custom wills, in all things should we do 't  
Coriolanus

The SABC's first three productions of Shakespeare were directed by Douglas Bristow: Much Ado About Nothing in 1977, Macbeth in 1980, and Twelfth Night in 1981.

Unlike theatre, where a play's director and actors work in interdependent relation to each other to effect the dynamic of performance, the production of dramatic work for television and cinema involves a third element: the camera. Director, actors and camera thus constitute a three-way relationship, although, as Anthony Davies points out, only the director is constantly concerned with a sense of totality (Filming Shakespeare's Plays, p. 170). In other words, because the director alone has responsibility to the actors as well as the camera, he or she is invested with a "necessary authority" over the vital aspects of conception, flow or continuity, and "dramatic shaping" (p. 175). Davies, among other critics, has also noted that, due to the role of the camera, film and television adaptations rely on directorial control to a much greater extent than do stage productions.

The aspect of control with which I am concerned here is interpretation: the extent to which the director holds and uses authority over the production of the specific meaning that the completed television text will assume. The nature

of interpretive authority cannot of course be examined in isolation: material to this aspect is whether, at the time of production, the director is employed by a private organisation or a public broadcasting corporation, the position and amount of autonomy that he or she holds within that institutional framework, or whether the director is working independently of any organisation at all. Also, the type of general ideological exposure to Shakespeare that the director has had in terms of standard education and theatrical experience is relevant to the interpretation which is brought to bear on the text chosen for television adaptation.

Neil Taylor, in a comparative analysis of the director's role in some of the BBC-Timelife Shakespeare productions, makes clear that interpretation is a more radical practice for some directors than for others. Elijah Moshinsky, for instance, director of five of these productions, believes that no play speaks for itself but instead "needs interpretation", and so, when working on Cymbeline, removed a quarter of the text, rearranged much of the dialogue, and generally tried to alter the entire structure of the play -- in so doing, Taylor suggests, displacing Shakespeare's role as author and assuming the position himself (p. 108).

Whether a director has to fight for this amount of directorial autonomy and textual leeway or is in the fortunate position of not having his or her choices questioned does not, however, affect an examination of Bristow's role as director of the SABC's first three

Shakespeare productions. Not only is it highly unlikely that the institutional context within which Bristow was working would have permitted such a fundamental and excessive re-writing of any of the plays, but Bristow has also made it very clear that he was in no way committed to a "radical" interpretation of Shakespeare. In an interview he said that "I have never approached a Shakespeare in order to illuminate what I think is new and clever about the play.... My attitude towards producing Shakespeare has been to take it almost as though I am meeting it for the first time," even though he acknowledges that "it is, I suppose, a somewhat conservative effort to present Shakespeare as closely as one can to what might be the first impressions" (Personal Interview).

The text as sacred object, Shakespeare as revered author: as far as a director like Bristow is concerned, these notions are facts which, as such, do not need to be held up to interrogation. Bristow's attitude to Shakespeare synchronizes with the traditional liberal humanist approach advocated by Bradley and Wilson-Knight, and his only "concession" to modifying the plays for television adaptation is to cut some of the lines -- an unavoidable compromise in view of the nature of the medium, demanding as it does fast-moving and verbally-uncomplicated action.

Interpretation, then, for Bristow, is a relatively straightforward aspect of his function as director. As he has said, "it matters to me less how you dress the characters and what period you set it in as to how truthful it is to the reading of the play" (Personal Interview). In other words,

it is a matter of translating the written text as directly and vividly as possible into television drama, while working on the assumption that that text has a single and fixed meaning. The reading, directing, or viewing of a text is seen exclusively as a process of passive consumption rather than one of active construction or production of meaning.

Among other critics who reject this idea, Gary Waller, writing specifically about Shakespeare on television, proposes instead that "[m]eaning in drama ... does not inhere in the work.... The text becomes the point of departure" (p. 24). From this perspective, not only can the written text become the point of departure in terms of alternative meanings for the director, but the television text itself can suggest alternatives for its audience because, like reading, "viewing also ... does not simply follow a text" (p. 24).

It is perhaps relevant to point out that at the time Bristow was directing Shakespeare for the SABC his title was "producer", rather than "director".<sup>1</sup> According to him, this was not only a carry-over from the SABC's radio services but also something of an oversight because "it always meant 'director'" (Personal Interview). These terms have acquired specialised meanings in theatre, film and television production today, but it is interesting to consider the meanings from which they have developed. The New Collins Concise English Dictionary (1982) defines "produce" as "make, create, bring before the public", while "direct" is "control, regulate, guide". As far as interpretation is concerned, then, and without wishing to underestimate Mr Bristow's

experience and expertise in television work, the title of "producer" is possibly more appropriate than he realises, since the term "director" suggests a stronger association with interpretational power than he allows the text to grant him.

The potential of the television text for offering different and multiple meanings for its viewers is supported by Waller when he points out that "a text articulates sociocultural pressures of which neither it nor its author is aware" (p. 25). If this lack of awareness is extended to include the director of a particular television programme -- if, in other words, meanings are generated which are beyond the control of any one person in production -- then the importance of his or her role in that production is necessarily diminished. As an example of how such unintentional ideological effect can be created, it is significant to note that none of Bristow's television productions of Shakespeare are set in an identifiably South African context, as has been the case with many local theatrical productions. This could have been an interesting and valid choice for Bristow to have made (in conjunction with his set and costume designers), considering that the three plays he directed were the among the first local drama productions for South Africa's fledgling national television service. Although it could be argued that televised Shakespeare with an obviously local flavour could also work to support the traditional view of an a-historical Shakespeare able to transcend different times, contexts and

cultures, it might also have been the case that such productions would have helped to bridge the perceived gap between what is esoteric and what isn't, what belongs to specifically British, metropolitan culture and what doesn't.

Instead, the way that the SABC's first three Renaissance dramas function is to re-present and perpetuate the notion of Shakespeare as untouchable and distant, as clearly not South African and, therefore, not for everyone save a select few. This, despite the fact of the SABC's appropriation of Shakespeare in the first place, tends to undermine the potential impact of its undertaking and, paradoxically, works to contradict Bristow's opinion that "Shakespeare deals with topics which are still here: love, death, greed, ambition.... These are universal themes which affect us all, because we're human beings" (Personal Interview).

The televising of a play by Shakespeare raises many problems and issues, not least of which relates to whether Shakespeare should in fact be televised at all. Maurice Charney, in his article "Is Shakespeare Suitable for Television?", (which is less interrogative than its title would suggest), answers the question in an ambiguously affirmative way. He asserts that "the basic rationale for Shakespeare on television lies in Shakespeare's own connection with popular theatre", and, even less to the point, because "Shakespeare tried his hand at many different kinds of plays that were popular in the theatre in his own lifetime,... [i]t seems unlikely that [he] himself would find anything inappropriate in the television medium" (pp. 1, 2).



From this perspective, the televising of Shakespeare appears to be nothing more than the attempt to continue a now-glorified process of (constrained) innovation which Shakespeare himself set in motion, and with the idea of him as just an "ordinary" man of the people used as further justification. Charney also claims that contemporary productions of Shakespeare's plays on stage, film and television contribute to the notion that "Shakespeare is a living dramatist and not an embalmed classic" (p. 3), which is simply an alternative version of Ben Jonson's claim that Shakespeare "was not of an age, but for all time", and "art alive still".

From slightly different points of view, John Wilders, literary consultant to the BBC Shakespeare Project, sees that television "can restore to Shakespeare's plays the unbroken flow and continuity they almost certainly achieved in the Renaissance theatre" ('Shakespeare on the Small Screen', p. 61), and Terence Hawkes suggests that the medium of television is a "reconstitution" of the Elizabethan theatre's "cultural potentialities" (Shakespeare's Talking Animals, p. 231). The insistence on drawing parallels between the modes of television and the Elizabethan theatre, based here on good editing techniques and an interventionist approach to television studies, tends to misrepresent the fact that a television production of Shakespeare is just that -- Shakespeare-on-television, and is, as such, a distinct kind of "text".<sup>2</sup> Televised Shakespeare is not simply a visual

adaptation of the written text, or an imitation of a stage performance, or a variant of a film production. Its conditions of production, its conventions, its semiotics, and its ideological impact are particular to itself; perceived similarities with, say, a seventeenth-century theatrical production tend to minimize the television text's own characteristics, causes and effects.

Although writing specifically about Shakespeare on film, Davies shows that it is not uncommon for critics or media analysts to have difficulty in understanding a particular type of cultural product on its own terms when he says that a

successful cinematic adaptation of a Shakespeare play must clearly treat the material in the dramatic terms of the cinema medium itself, but that should never be taken to imply the elimination of that theatricality which is inevitably embedded in the text

(Filming Shakespeare's Plays, p. 24).

In emphasizing what is perceived to be the innate theatrical essence of the text written specifically for stage performance, Davies implies that, when that text is appropriated by a medium other than the theatrical, there exists the possibility of displacement or loss of meaning.

Davies's injunction to retain as far as possible the "theatricality" of Shakespeare's dramatic works may in part arise from the fact that the nature of the film medium virtually demands that lines be cut from the written texts, and, as mentioned earlier, the same applies to television. It should be added, however, that modern acting styles seem

to necessitate cuts for stage productions as well. In connection with this, Bristow has said that

modern theatrical productions of Shakespeare and most of the "classics" ... would benefit by some judicious cutting of the text -- not, I hasten to add, to improve the play, but to make the production more effective and, possibly, more acceptable to a modern audience whose visual and dramatic literacy has been altered by television  
(Personal Letter, 28 November 1991).

Shakespeare's plays are long and verbally dense, and it would be unusual to find a contemporary production in any performance medium that includes the full dramatic text.

There are two reasons for this: first, television programmes are required to be of convenient length so as to fit neatly into the broadcasting schedule. Most programmes are thirty or sixty minutes long, and time is allocated within them for commercial breaks. Lengthier programmes are often segmented into separate episodes. Although drama forms a distinct television genre and programmes frequently extend to ninety minutes or more, no Shakespeare production which incorporates the full text could fit into even this relatively extensive space of time. Television is a medium where form dominates content.

Bristow concedes that the cutting of lines from the plays is necessary for television due to a time consideration, although care must be taken not to "brutalise" them. He attempts to justify what is essentially a destructive act by distinguishing between lines which are important and those which are perhaps superfluous, this

distinction being based on the view that character and plot development have primacy: textual discourse which does not, in Bristow's opinion, forward an understanding of either is not "madly significant", and he claims that this is the case with Macbeth because it is "such a wonderfully tight play". He went on to say,

It's my firm belief that Macbeth particularly ... was written almost as though [Shakespeare] had an inkling of a television or a film medium some time in the distant future, because it's very tight, the scenes cut from one to the other in a very filmic way

(Personal Interview).<sup>3</sup>

The second reason for cutting lines from the plays is that the inherent logic of television as a medium is predominantly visual rather than linguistic, or, as Hearst maintains, "[l]anguage seems to play a secondary role" (quoted in Coursen, 'The Bard and the Tube', p. 8).<sup>4</sup> It can be disputed whether this would apply to all television genres to the same extent, but if it is acknowledged that Shakespeare's plays need to be cut because, on television, actions speak louder than words, then it can be seen that the formal logic of the medium dominates content in a second and equally significant way. If this was not the case, neither Shakespeare nor the work of any other dramatist which has to be cut would stand a chance of being successfully adapted for television.

Cutting a text for production, however standard a practice it is considered to be, is perhaps not as innocuous

a process as Bristow and other directors would suggest. As Hans Enzensberger has explained,

[t]he producer can never pretend, like the traditional novelist, "to stand above things". He is therefore partisan from the start. This fact finds formal expression in his techniques. Cutting, editing, dubbing -- these are techniques for conscious manipulation without which the use of the new media is inconceivable. It is precisely in these work processes that their productive power reveals itself -- and here it is completely immaterial whether one is dealing with the production of a reportage or a play. The material, whether "documentary" or "fiction", is in each case only a prototype, a half-finished article, and the more closely one examines its origins, the more blurred the difference becomes

(p. 34).

Apart from the length of Shakespeare's texts, problems are caused by the use and style of early modern English, whereby it is often generally acknowledged by those involved in broadcast drama that television viewers experience difficulty in understanding the language. One of the flaws of this perception is the tendency to regard television viewers as a homogeneous mass, as the collective noun "audience" might suggest, rather than as a heterogeneous group of individuals who might each have a different attitude towards Renaissance language. It seems to be a cause for pleasant surprise to discover that many people do not find its particular discursive features as impenetrable as is commonly thought. Bristow says that he received a positive response from many viewers in the form of letters after his Shakespeare productions were broadcast, and concludes that

"people are actually much brighter than television companies and their statistics-gatherers believe" (Personal Interview).

From a director's point of view, Shakespeare's language can create a problem within the context of the realistic demands of the television medium.<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Miller, executive producer of the BBC-Timelife Shakespeare productions, says that limits to realism have to be established because the language "comes from the past,... the artistic past, with a style and an idiom of its own which can't be violated" (quoted in Hallinan, p. 134). For Wilders, the problem relates more specifically to dramatic dialogue and monologue: the hyperbolic and ceremonious style of many of Shakespeare's characters' speeches requires a "public, formal effect" which television is unable to provide and, therefore, choices have to be made "between the artifice of Shakespeare's rhetoric and the realistic conventions of television" ('Shakespeare on the Small Screen', pp. 60, 61).

A similar problem comes into focus with the subject of setting, which includes location, *mise en scène* and costume. Wilders has demonstrated that, as far as the language of Shakespeare's plays is concerned, there is an inherent conflict between the predominantly naturalistic mode of television and the artificial, flamboyant modes of dramatic discourse. The same conflict arises when a director has to decide whether his or her production should attempt to create an impression of reality and authenticity, or whether it should refuse the realistic mode altogether and opt for an obviously fictitious setting. Miller expresses television's

tendency to be restrictive when he says "as soon as you put Shakespeare on that box where ... people are accustomed to seeing naturalistic events presented, you are more or less obliged to present the thing as naturally as you can" (quoted in Hallinan, p. 136).

Implicit in what both Miller and Wilders have said is that realism itself is an artificial construct, as Fiske and Hartley have pointed out; its "'naturalness' arises not from nature itself but from the fact that realism is the mode in which our particular culture prefers its ritual condensations to be cast" (p. 160). Even the BBC-Timelife Shakespeare productions, considered to have broken new ground in many ways, chose to stay within the limits of naturalism, which Waller finds "revealing" considering the "revolutionary possibilities" of television (p. 28).

The settings Bristow chose for his productions are significant in terms of what they imply about his attitude towards comedy, on the one hand, and tragedy, on the other. Admittedly, these classifications are crude and therefore misrepresentative, but it is noteworthy that the SABC's productions of Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night are both specifically "announced" in the opening credits as comedies, whereas Macbeth is presented with no such generic introduction. This is a way of preparing the audience for the type of performance that is to follow, although it is less descriptive than prescriptive, and can be interpreted as an attempt -- whether deliberate or not -- to close off alternative readings for the viewer by underplaying or

discounting those elements which are, in fact, not comic at all. Furthermore, in Tennenhouse's words, the "arrangement of plays according to generic categories automatically detaches the work from history and presumes the internal organisation of its meaning" (Power on Display, p. 5).

Bristow's two "comedies" share similar features in terms of setting. Both productions are studio-bound, and exhibit what Gerald Millerson terms "apparent atmospheric realism", whereby a few associative details combine to suggest a particular context or environment (p. 135). Props are minimal, and their usefulness lies predominantly in their symbolic value. The stylised settings of Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night were an effect, Bristow says, of the low budgets he was given for these productions (Telephonic Interview). In Much Ado, for instance, the interior of Leonato's house is very simply represented by stone-coloured arches and columns against a black background, and the lighting is relatively dim. The exterior scenes are lighter and brighter, and make use of white wooden fences and balustrades, and an occasional fern or palm. Aural effects can also be strongly suggestive, and Bristow has used the sound of birds to represent "exterior" scenes.

Although the style of the costumes in this production strives to copy the type of clothes worn by Elizabethans, colours are used in a rather obvious way to suggest the moral nature of the characters, as well as the alliances or conflicts between them. Don John, Borachio and Conrade are kitted out in ominous midnight blue, Hero is in virginal



cream and white, Margaret in crimson (trouble?), and Benedick, Beatrice, Don Pedro and Claudio in various combinations of attractive (and ultimately congenial) tan and ochre. Leonato, interestingly, appears in the same colour as the trio of baddies, although halfway through the production changes into dove grey.

The setting of Twelfth Night incorporates what Bristow terms "an outrageous visual idea": a very colourful mixture of modern and period styles whereby, for example, the opening scene in Orsino's house is set in "a kind of slightly narcissistic medieval gymnasium" (Personal Interview). One man is working out on an exercise bicycle, others are lifting weights, and Orsino himself is having his back massaged by a Japanese woman in a white kimono. The costumes are also an odd combination of modern and period, with the men mainly in multi-coloured leggings, tunics and strange hats. Orsino's servants are in leotard-type outfits, and Olivia and Maria are the only characters who wear clothes of modern design. Again, as in Much Ado About Nothing, relatively few props are used, and they function connotatively rather than purely denotatively. Of the setting of Twelfth Night, Bristow says, "I don't think it was totally successful, but it is a comedy and it had no serious intent".

This comment emphasizes what can be seen as a far more earnest and solemn attitude towards Macbeth on the part of its director.<sup>6</sup> As far as the production's setting is concerned, this seriousness is evidenced by a noticeable attempt to achieve a sense of realism. Horses are used in

the battle scenes, for example; the walls of Dunsinane resemble solid stone, and the wounded soldiers drip "real" blood. Although this production was also filmed completely in the studio, the atmospheric realism that it strives for renders the "exterior" scenes fairly credible. The costumes, too, are less stylised than those in Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night. Macbeth, in comparison, suggests an earnest endeavour on Bristow's part to have the viewer treat "the tragedy" as seriously as he does.

Wilders has pointed out that, particularly as far as Shakespeare's comedies are concerned, relying as they do on contrived situations and mistaken identities, the realism of the setting can conflict with the obviously artificial conventions of the plays to the extent that the already improbable events become even more difficult to believe in ('Shakespeare on the Small Screen', p. 59). If the reverse is true -- that those plays which are considered to deal with more serious issues actually benefit from the effects of realism in terms of how they are perceived by the viewer -- then Bristow's production of Macbeth can be seen to support this.

The SABC's undertaking to produce Shakespeare for television entailed problems which were specifically related to its South African context. First, not only were few people available with much experience in the technicalities of making television programmes of any sort so early on in the development of SABC-TV (even Bristow was a novice), but

there was also a relatively small circle of experienced actors to choose from when it came to casting -- and both Bristow and Leach made it clear that, when producing Shakespeare, only experienced actors will do, especially for the more substantial roles. Bristow did not hold open auditions for any part in any of his three productions, and for lead roles no auditions were held at all. As far as casting is concerned, he says that "if you're in the business you make it your business to know most of the actors anyway. Certainly you know all the better ones" (Personal Interview).

A consequence of this has been that many of the more well-known South African actors appear in at least three of the eight local television productions, Michael Richard taking lead position with five roles altogether. Of the effect of the same actors being seen over and over again in connection with Shakespeare, Graham Holderness suggests that the personalities of "familiar Shakespearean stars" become "so subdued to what they work in that they appear to be characters from Shakespeare" ('Radical Potentiality', p. 198). Although this is specifically related to the recent BBC-Timelife series, there is a recognisable parallel with the SABC-TV productions: together, through the alternation of the same actors, they work to familiarise the viewer with the particular techniques, interpretations and, ultimately, the meaning that is traditionally associated with Shakespeare.

A second issue which arises with the production of Renaissance drama in South Africa is also connected to acting, and concerns the ways in which Shakespearean

characters are presented in terms of accent. Bristow says that his only concern was for his actors to be "understandable". It is noticeable, nevertheless, that when it comes to Shakespeare, most local actors opt for as standard English an accent as possible, even though their natural accents are "standard" South African English. Although this seems to apply mainly to those with major or at least "serious" parts, one of its effects is to reinforce the perception that Shakespeare is presented more naturally, or at least more authentically, when in distinct association with English-ness.

A further implication is that, because Shakespeare's major characters represent the upper social classes (Scottish royalty, for instance, or Italian nobility), the "proper" accents used by actors playing these roles lend added weight to their positions and points of view within the drama. The comic roles in Shakespeare are represented by men or women of the lower classes and, with these, actors tend to affect variations of British dialects. John Lesley as the porter in Macbeth has a very strong Scottish drawl, for example, and the actors playing Dogberry, Verges and the watchmen in Much Ado About Nothing are clearly Devonshire men.

Variations in dialect and accent within South African English can be traced back to the more than twenty distinct regional dialects that the 1820 settlers brought with them (Lanham, English in South Africa, p. 16). The discovery of gold and diamonds on the Reef brought the second large wave of immigrants to the country between 1875 and 1904, and

Lanham notes that, by this stage within South African English,

there were now strong forces working towards the creation and perpetuation of social class dialects. Naturally enough the prestige dialect of the educated, wealthy and professional groups was the standard English of Great Britain -- the dialect of the same social classes in Britain. South African English was regarded as less acceptable. This social evaluation of a dialect still persists to the present day in the cities and other areas most affected by the industrial revolution in South Africa

(p. 20).

From the 1920s, when South Africa underwent large-scale urban industrialisation, the Afrikaans language has also had a significant influence on the development of South African English.

Today, however, English in South Africa has no clearly marked regional dialects (p. 33). The country is linguistically heterogeneous, with English and Afrikaans as the two "official" languages, some dozen or more indigenous languages, and the languages of, among many others, fairly sizeable Greek, Chinese and Portuguese communities. Few people who do not speak English as a first language do so without an accent which would indicate their home language, whether it be Hindi, Xhosa or Afrikaans. The Anglo-centric values which obtain in this country work to locate those minority groups who do not speak English with a standard English accent outside of a perceived "prestige" elite, which has come to be associated with (social) characteristics such as intelligence, sophistication, and authoritativeness.<sup>7</sup> Any

accent, therefore, which is not "standard" English, carries relatively negative social values and, when represented in association with "comic" or "stupid" characters, confirms stereotyped notions about the lack of intelligence or the coarseness of those of lower social and economic class.

For a South African viewer of locally produced television drama from SABC-TV's early years, the absence of blacks as actors in programmes made for TV1 is strikingly obvious. This has connections with the legal restrictions which pertained to theatres in South Africa until the late 1970s, whereby Proclamation R228 of 1973 under the Group Areas Act of 1966 prohibited racially mixed casts and mixed audiences at places of public entertainment except under the authorisation of a special permit, although it was permissible for an all-black cast to perform for an all-white audience and vice versa (Horrell et al., Race Relations as Regulated by Law, pp. 56-57).<sup>8</sup>

Although these prohibitions had been relaxed to a large extent by 1978, they continued, in the attitudes underlying them, to affect early South African broadcasting practices and production for a few years. When asked why none of his productions of Shakespeare has a black member in the cast or the technical crew, Bristow replied that,

[t]o the best of my knowledge, there has never been any restriction placed on any director of television drama by the SABC regarding the employment of actors of colour.

It must be noted, though, that until about 1980/81, the accommodation of black actors in dressing rooms and restaurants on SABC premises was made difficult for production staff like myself,

mainly because a "separate facilities" mentality persisted in some quarters of the SABC. One had to make prior "special arrangements" with security people and with the manager of the restaurants -- which was a private concern, functioning on SABC property....

Technical crew members were never chosen by me. They would be allocated to my production on the basis of availability. Until about 1983, it seemed to me that most of the available black technicians were assigned to Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho programmes, where their knowledge of the language being used would be vital to effective communication.

(Personal Letter, 28 November 1991).

Bristow has worked with black actors in other television drama productions, dating right back to The Villagers series in 1976, and has worked with black technicians "on a number of occasions over the years". He is no racist, but he is, however, a purist when it comes to Shakespeare. From the same letter, his comments are again worth quoting at length:

Shakespeare wrote one play about a person of colour. Unless one decides to transplant his other plays to different cultures, climes, or political backdrops (or, perhaps, to re-write history as he knew it), the casting of actors of colour would mostly seem to be inappropriate. At worst, it would invite justifiable charges of 'tokenism'. (I refer only to professional productions. School and university productions should have quite different objectives).

On the other hand, all-black productions of Macbeth, The Tempest, or Julius Caesar can work (and have worked) very well indeed.... I should love to direct a Romeo and Juliet in which the Capulets were white and the Montagu clan was black!

My goals, when directing a good play, are: to suspend disbelief in the audience; to make the production dynamic in its effect; and to be consistent in its treatment and style. For reasons no more sinister and no less important, the question of black actors appearing in my three Shakespeare productions simply never arose.

The idea that the inclusion of black actors would affect the dynamics of a production or its stylistic consistence indicates, again, some of the preconceived notions about the "correct" treatment of Shakespeare in performance. Many recent stage productions of Shakespeare have employed black actors, as did some of the SABC's later television productions, as will be seen in the following chapter. During the period in which Bristow directed his productions, however, blacks were not considered for parts -- not because they were black, but because it was Shakespeare.

The overtly un-South African settings of these early productions, the actors' identifiably British accents, and the all-white casts and crews give the impression that their producers are attempting to follow the example of the type of Shakespearean presentation seen in Stratford-on-Avon, or at least what that is imagined to be. Bristow's comments and their tone indicate his dislike of the conservative institutional context within which he was working, but, at the same time, he fails to see that his productions were transplanting Shakespeare's plays to "cultures, climes, [and] political backdrops" which are very different to those in which they originated. In his negation of the particular context of his productions, Bristow manages to present versions of Shakespeare which, in actuality, strongly reflect those aspects of South African social and cultural politics which he claims to oppose.



The emphasis on Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night as comedies is supported by the television programme guides supplied in daily newspapers on the day of their broadcast. Much Ado was heralded in The Argus as a "star-studded cast in beautiful period costume romping through one of the Bard's more realistic comedies" (6 October 1977, p. 2), and Twelfth Night is "Shakespeare's sunniest comedy set in that magic land called Illyria" (Argus, 17 October 1981, p. 7).

The opening scenes of each production immediately establish their comic aspects. The credits for Much Ado About Nothing are superimposed over images of Don Pedro and his colleagues talking and laughing round open fires, while cheerful music is played over to accompany the song, "Blow thy horn, jolly hunter". Recorded especially for the production because Bristow wanted "authentic music of the time" (Telephone Interview), this song is described as a "rousing English tune" (Music from the Thirteenth to Twentieth Centuries).<sup>9</sup> The use of old-fashioned instruments, such as crumhorns, sackbuts and racketts lends Much Ado the "authentic feel" that Bristow was aiming for, even though the song itself was originally composed by William Cornysh, circa 1465 to 1523. As such, it represents an earlier period in history than that during which the play was written, but Bristow could probably safely assume that his audience would not be aware of this discrepancy -- or care, even if they were.

Twelfth Night opens with three short extracts from the play, appearing separately on the screen and in inverted commas:

"Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous,  
there shall be no more cakes and ale?"

"I am sure care's an enemy to life!"

"Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness,  
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much".

The content of these extracts clearly emphasises the production's potential for amusement and entertainment but, at the connotative level, they work to foreground the authority of the literary text -- the fons et origio -- on which the production rests. What this also (and visually) demonstrates is that, as Keir Elam has suggested, the relationship between the written text and the performance text "is not one of simple priority but a complex of reciprocal constraints constituting a powerful intertextuality" (p. 209).

For these productions, the opening images and music prefigure an interpretation of the plays which seeks to stress their comedy to the exclusion of more problematic issues, such as the importance of a woman's reputation in a patriarchal society, for example, or the superiority automatically attributed to those of "noble birth". The emphasis on humour, fun and light-heartedness is also perhaps an attempt to work against the tendency of television comedy to fall flat due to the lack of a reacting audience. Stanley Wells goes so far as to say that, for this reason,

Shakespearean comedy "has no chance of seeming other than deadly on a television screen", whereas comedy "written especially for television acknowledges this need by providing studio audiences, not only for broadly comic shows but also for the more subtle kinds of situation comedy" ('Television Shakespeare', p. 272).

In both Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night, the sexual overtones of the plays are given prominence by the symbolic use of objects or props, as to constitute what Millerson terms "productional rhetoric" (p. 212). Act II Scene III of the former, where Benedick overhears Don Pedro, Claudio and Leonato discussing Beatrice's passion for him, opens with an image of a red apple in extreme close-up. In the next frame, a mouth bites into it, with the camera only tracking back a few frames later to allow the viewer to see that it is Benedick holding and eating the apple. He continues to nibble, chew, and otherwise play with the apple throughout the scene; at one point he allows it (by now half-eaten) to fall onto the ground, where it is picked up a moment later by Don Pedro who tosses it into the air as he exits, to be neatly caught by Benedick; and, as he utters the lines,

"They say the lady is fair--'tis a truth, I can bear them witness; and virtuous--'tis so, I cannot reprove it..."

he pokes a hole into the apple with his right forefinger and probes it distractedly. In this context, the red apple connotes, rather unsubtly, sexual temptation, and Benedick's

toying with it -- as he has toyed verbally with Beatrice -- represents his vacillation about whether he should seriously entertain thoughts of her as a lover.

A similar device is used in Twelfth Night, where torsos of plaster of Paris or stone form a significant part of the mise en scène. Those in Orsino's gymnasium and house are male figures, and those in Olivia's house and Sir Toby's rooms are female, and are raised on pedestals. A change of scene is often marked by an image in close-up of one of these torsos and, for much of the time, they are either visible in the background or the action actually takes place around them. Their presence is in fact so conspicuously felt that they become, in Millerson's phrase, "deliberate overstatement" (p. 215) -- constant reminders that, for all Orsino's reliance on the techniques of courtly love and Olivia's elaborate pursuit of Cesario, what all the games and manipulation and lies boil down to is sexual desire and the hoped-for gratification thereof.

The emphasis on sexuality in Twelfth Night and Much Ado About Nothing seems most likely to represent an attempt to make Shakespeare as interesting and exciting as possible for a modern audience. The productions suggest that the way to do this is to put into effect the received idea that Shakespeare is "bawdy", a notion which challenges the common perception that the plays are "boring" or "esoteric".

Another noticeable feature shared by both of Bristow's productions of Shakespearean comedy (and one which,

significantly, is not used in Macbeth) is the use of direct address: both Beatrice and Benedick talk directly to the camera during the scenes where they "accidentally" overhear the stratagems of their friends, and Viola's asides take the same form. This serves two purposes. First, because the presence of the viewer via the camera is openly acknowledged, these characters appeal to the audience to attribute greater sincerity and authority to their positions than those of the other characters and, second, it is a deliberate attempt to involve the viewer in their respective dramatic predicaments by appearing to offer increased insight into them. Consequently, their points of view and roles are invested with heightened significance.<sup>10</sup>

In Much Ado About Nothing, for instance, this technique functions to foreground the relationship between Beatrice and Benedick with the result that other relationships and events are minimised. This effect is sustained by the choice of lines for cutting: few cuts are from scenes in which Beatrice and Benedick engage in dialogue with each other. The relationship between them, based on turbulence, misunderstanding and verbal warfare, which constitutes the main comic plot, is thus accorded greater precedence over the Hero-Claudio plot line than it has been given by the text. A.R. Humphreys, editor of the Arden Much Ado About Nothing, has noted that many recent productions of the play have attempted to balance the comic and tragic aspects, "to harmonize the play's gayer and graver elements" (p. 47), but the SABC's television production has taken the opposite

direction. Consequently, the roles of characters like Margaret, the Friar and Don John, already small, are further diminished, and the dramatic inconsistencies and difficulties which are present have been unintentionally compounded by Bristow's attempt to strip the play down to its comic foundations as far as possible.

In Twelfth Night, Viola's direct acknowledgement of the viewer-via-camera encourages sympathy for the ambiguous position she is in: as a woman, desirous of Orsino's love, and yet, thought to be a man, desired by Olivia. Although allowing the focus to fall on the character of Viola, Bristow, curiously, has cut lines from her part which emphasise verbally the double and dubious nature of her role: "I am not that I play", and "I am not what I am" (I. 2. 185, III. 1. 143).

It is worth noting the significance of lines from other scenes which have also been cut. Antonio's declarations of "willing love", "desire" and "devotion" for Sebastian (III. 3. 4. 11; III. 4. 372) have been reduced to a minimum; as a result, the explanation at the end of the drama that he offers to Orsino for his earlier actions comes as something of a surprise to the audience, since the extent of his emotions has not been fully articulated until he explains that

His life I gave him, and did thereto add  
My love, without retention or restraint,  
All his in dedication. For his sake  
Did I expose myself (pure for his love)  
Into the danger of this adverse town  
(V. 1. 78-82).

The removal of much of what Antonio has to say about his love for Sebastian, "pure" though it may be, not only has the effect of reducing the depth of this character's feelings, but also implies that the director (consciously or not) thought that a modern audience would have understood their relationship to be a homoerotic one. Although the mise en scène of this production indicates that sexual matters have their place in Shakespeare, and can even be accentuated, it is suggested that sexual innuendo can be accommodated only when related to heterosexuality.<sup>11</sup>

Further analysis of text cut from the plays reveals reasons for its removal which are more specifically associated with the demands and conventions of television production. First, much of it contains esoteric allusions that might be considered to be "above the heads" of average television viewers, such as Benedick's references to Troilus and Cressida and Marlowe's Hero and Leander (Much Ado About Nothing, V. 2. 29-34), or words that may have been in common use in the sixteenth century but which have become archaic today, such as Sir Toby's description of an acquaintance as "a rogue, and a passy measures pavin" (Twelfth Night, V. 1. 198). The cutting of such references assumes a lack of sophistication on the part of the audience, and operates to (partially) dislocate the plays from their historical and linguistic background.

Second, many lines have been cut to facilitate studio production. Borachio, meeting Conrade at night, says "Stand

thee close then under this penthouse, for it drizzles rain, and I will, like a true drunkard, utter all to thee" (Twelfth Night, III. 3. 101-3). Bristow's production saves the expense and trouble of having water fall like rain and of including a penthouse in the set by omitting the references to both, which serves as a reminder of economic constraint.

Third, a director may justify the cutting of text based on the camera's ability to cause some of the characters' verbal reactions to become expendable by focusing on their gestures or facial expressions. In Much Ado About Nothing, when Borachio admits that Hero is indeed innocent of slander, the shock, sorrow and sense of self-reproach that Claudio might have brought to his response -- "Sweet Hero! Now thy image doth appear/ In the rare semblance that I lov'd it first", (V. 1. 245-6) -- are registered only on his face and drawn attention to by the camera zeroing in on him. Whether or not the substitution of the visual for the verbal in this way is satisfactory or even justifiable is not at issue. The codes of television representation demand exactly the opposite of what Shakespeare's plays represent in terms of discursive complexity and overstatement.<sup>12</sup>

Ronnie Wilson, head of TV1 programming, has emphasised that, in his view, "everything on television should be entertaining, even Shakespeare -- especially Shakespeare" (his emphasis). A curious distinction is being drawn here between that which is designated either "educational", "informative", or "entertaining". An informative programme, presumably, would cover genres such as news broadcasts,



public affairs programmes or social documentaries.

Entertainment, on the other hand, implies amusement or diversion rather than any explicit engagement with "serious" or "political" issues, and, in consequence, seems to be considered as ideologically innocuous, if not neutral.

Bristow's productions of Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night make a conscious effort to fall primarily into the category of entertainment, to stress their comedy and to attenuate other thematic elements. Wilson's comment suggests that Shakespeare is not commonly perceived as "entertainment", a light and humorous diversion in the way of situation comedies or game shows. To effectively marry the weight and seriousness which a twentieth-century audience traditionally associates with Shakespearean drama, on the one hand, with their expectations of television comedy on the other is a difficult -- if not perhaps paradoxical -- task.

In an interview Bristow said that, when approaching the production of a play by Shakespeare, for him research or secondary reading is not a particularly important process because "in the first place the play must appeal to you in a certain way". Later, though, he said that, in preparation for Macbeth, he read Shakespearean Tragedy by A.C. Bradley, Shakespearian Production by G. Wilson Knight, and Coleridge on Shakespeare, edited by Terence Hawkes;<sup>13</sup> he also made a point of seeing the film versions directed by Orson Welles and Roman Polanski, neither of which, he stated, influenced him greatly (Personal Letter, 7 June 1990).

As far as the language and plot are concerned, for  
Bristow Macbeth

satisfies the twentieth-century desire for instant satisfaction, instant excitement, instant involvement.... It is a very direct story, a very direct set of personalities.... It tells you up front -- Bingo, this is what's happening.  
(Personal Interview).

And, as might be expected, Bristow's interpretation is that  
the play

concentrates on that most serious and basic of human crimes, or experiences if you like, and that is murder -- the decision to take another person's life and the consequences of that, the mental consequences".

Compared to Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night, Macbeth has received very different treatment in terms of directorial conception, studio production and presentation. The opening and closing credits are printed in blood-red Gothic lettering and are accompanied, in the beginning, by a voice-over of the witches repeating the line "fair is foul and foul is fair" against a background of eerie sounds of wind, frogs and cats; at the end, the credits feature against a black background with, after a significant silence, sinister music over.

The witches in this production are represented in ways that unintentionally contradict each other. The initial image of them, which serves to introduce the television text itself, consists of a big close-up of their three heads revolving slowly on the screen, the very contrived nature of

the shot suggesting a distortion and disorder within the material world.<sup>14</sup> The later scenes with the witches, however, work against this initial artificiality: here they are more realistically and conventionally presented as ugly, blood-bespattered, cackling hags, on a "real" heath with a "real" cauldron. The shots of them are familiar and undistorted and, as such, counteract the metaphysical significance that the director took such pains to associate them with at the beginning.

Bristow has laid great stress on the role of the witches and how the atmosphere that they create permeates the drama; this emphasis, he says, is related to historical record, which indicates that, during the Renaissance, there was a belief in witchcraft and its influences. His interpretation of the witches, then, is that they are "real", and that their influence "continued to recur and to exert [itself] on the State", rather than that they represent manifestations of Macbeth's mad ambition and desire for political power. Although this latter interpretation might be more compatible with a production concerned primarily with the psychological effects of human action, the view taken by Bristow is consistent with the dichotomy he draws between Shakespearean tragedy and comedy, extending as it does to polarise history and fiction, seriousness and humour, relevance and farce.<sup>15</sup>

The predominantly straightforward use of the camera in Macbeth supports the notion that a realistic production involves more than just a naturalistic mise en scène. The heavy-handedness with which the two notable exceptions to

this approach have been executed makes them all the more obvious and, simultaneously, problematic. The first is the opening image of the witches-on-the-wheel, mentioned above, and the second is Macbeth's "dagger speech". During this scene, the actor playing Macbeth moves backwards and forwards on a circular staircase, and is filmed from above throughout. Semiotically, the staircase no doubt connotes the circuitousness of Macbeth's anguished thoughts, and the overhead camera angle emphasises the pressure he is under and the dislocation of his sense of reality. This technique can be powerful but, in this instance, it loses a great deal of its effect by constantly obscuring the character's face and allowing only the top of his head to be viewed. In consequence, the impact of the dialogue is considerably weakened -- an unfortunate effect for any production, but especially for one which focuses on personal torment.

In the SABC-TV version of Macbeth, Seyton's role has been given greater prominence than it originally has in the play itself. When Banquo is killed, Seyton takes the part of the third murderer, based on Bristow's reading of this character as a spy sent by Macbeth to keep an eye on the proceedings. Also, at the end of the drama, when Malcolm is hailed as the new king of Scotland, Seyton is at the forefront of the group of his supporters, sycophantically handing him a cup and cheering him with the others. The camera picks this up and holds him for a second. Bristow says that, with Seyton,

I've made what little political comment you might find in this production.... What I was saying there was that this process of political or civil strife will continue,... sort of a continuing outbreak of cancer. I haven't gone strongly for it, but I have tried to show that this is an on-going historical process

(Personal Interview).

To judge from a review of Macbeth published in The Argus the day after it was broadcast, either the production conveyed the idea of continuous political disorder too subtly or it was not considered significant enough to mention. Peter Goosen concentrates on mise en scène and atmospheric effect, and reveals some of the preconceived notions that are brought to bear on a production when he writes that

[w]hat is arguably Shakespeare's greatest tragedy was the highlight of last night's viewing and it was obvious that SABC-TV went to a great deal of trouble and expense with their two-hour production of Macbeth. It was outstanding visually and the costumes were lavish. The damp misty scenes of twelfth-century Scotland were continued with accuracy [sic]....

This play stands or falls on these key performances [Macbeth and Lady Macbeth], and the Douglas Bristow production was still standing at the end, if somewhat shakily.

MacCabe was a low-key Macbeth who came across as a sort of weak-kneed, snivelling mystic.... He was stricken by conscience, certainly, but never scared witless, as he was portrayed last night by an expressionless and soft-voiced MacCabe. Only in the final scene did he look like a fighting man dealt a cruel blow by fate

('Lavish Macbeth the Highlight', p. 15).

If this review can be seen as (even partially) representative of the concerns and expectations of a South African television audience, then Bristow was not catering to an unknown quantity.

## CHAPTER THREE

Out of this wood do not desire to go:  
 Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no

A Midsummer Night's Dream

The most immediately noticeable difference between Douglas Bristow's productions of Shakespeare for SABC-TV and Ken Leach's is that the latter's are, on the whole, far more lavish in costume, props and setting. Comparatively, they display an extravagant attention to background detail and atmospheric realism, benefiting from much larger casts and technical crews as well as the input of horticultural consultants, sculptors and specially-recorded music. Leach's lack of interest in a stylized approach to Shakespeare is explained by his view that "[it] needs the colour, it needs a visual accompaniment to what the text is. So that's why I tend to set it historical [sic]". He does, however, qualify the extent to which he has aspired to historical accuracy:

That's not to say that I try to give it an authentic Elizabethan flavour, because I think the men look quite silly, so one then tones it down, modifies it in some kind of way so that the guy at least looks romantic.... Historical accuracy for me has never been a great determiner in drama. Shakespeare himself didn't give a fuck about historical accuracy,

thereby disclaiming academic knowledge while simultaneously claiming an alternative familiarity with Shakespeare himself.

Leach deliberately set out to present his productions of Shakespeare in a conservative and traditional way, believing

that that is what an audience expects "due to the colonial nature of English society in South Africa"; this element, he believes, has "prohibited an energetic, original approach" to Shakespeare. This indicates that Leach feels the need to justify his conventional interpretation of Renaissance drama by claiming to meet the perceived expectations of a hypothetical audience, and also that expectations exist on his part in terms of the type of audience he imagines he is catering to. This very narrow view -- that of responding to an already-established market at the expense of stimulating a new one -- works to limit the possibilities for challenging orthodoxy even more, ensuring that Shakespeare remains the exclusive property of a select, knowing (and perhaps bored) few.

By the time Leach began working for the SABC in 1978, he had extensive background experience in theatre, both as a director and as an actor (one of his roles, just a year earlier, was that of Don Pedro in Bristow's SABC-TV production of Much Ado About Nothing). His attitude towards Shakespearean drama is the one commonly shared by those at the SABC involved in its reproduction:

[Shakespeare] has survived for so many centuries, and each particular decade or century has found relevance -- amazing aspects and dimensions, philosophies, psychologies, social values, mores -- it's universal. Perhaps that's why Shakespeare is so fascinating, that you can draw on so many elements in it and emphasize so many aspects which is why I think it's a living, breathing, dynamic thing.

For Leach, the plays do have political significance, but "only on the most universal scale.... Merchant certainly has racial discrimination, that one is perhaps the most specifically political of all Shakespeare's plays -- and Othello, of course". This is a very restricted view of what the political entails, limiting itself to recognising social discrimination on the basis of colour or religion which, interestingly, is considered to be a "universal" phenomenon rather than particular or historically rooted. The inequality of gender relations, the existence and effects of patriarchy, and differential class structures -- concerns raised by all three of the plays directed by Leach -- are unacknowledged or disregarded, suggesting either that these issues are so naturally an aspect of social life that they can be taken for granted rather than interrogated, or that they are, in fact, absent.

A Midsummer Night's Dream was in its pre-production stage when Roy Sargeant, Professor of Drama at Rhodes University, joined the SABC on a full-time basis as the manager of the English television drama department. Leach's comments indicate that it was considered inevitable that someone like Sargeant would be greatly interested in producing Renaissance drama for television: "Roy, coming from Grahamstown, academic background, that kind of thing, has always been interested in the classics". Ronnie Wilson adds that "Roy probably was the most enthusiastic Shakespeare manager we ever had.... I think because of his background,...



he was probably the most informed manager we've had on Shakespeare".

Sargeant himself makes it clear that his background and experience had an affirmative effect as far as televising Shakespeare was concerned -- "obviously coming out of the university and a teaching situation and with a natural love for Shakespeare, one did it" -- but he qualifies what might otherwise be seen as a predominantly personal motive by saying that he "also felt very strongly that South African actors should get a chance to play these roles".

A Midsummer Night's Dream and the subsequent productions of Shakespeare directed by Leach under Sargeant were probably advantaged by larger budgets due to the prestige that Sargeant's engagement lent to the English television drama department, although this may have been masked by the SABC's decision to increase its budgets for all locally-produced programmes.<sup>1</sup> As manager and later head of that section, Sargeant was not directly involved in the making of these productions, and left the more fundamental directorial decisions to Leach. His approach to Shakespeare, however, contributes to the general ethos at the SABC in the sense that it confirms the prevailing idealist beliefs as to the literary and dramatic value of the work and its meaning:

The plays refine your sensibility about existence, that is what is so wonderful about them. They touch on things which are absolutely universal, they stretch across centuries, and they do it in this exotic fashion which creates a new enlightenment.... I think the refinement of one's view of life is just glorious, but then that's all great art.

When asked to describe what he sees as the political or ideological significance of Shakespeare's plays, Sargeant replied that he "never set out to make anything that has a political message -- that seems to defeat the ends of entertainment". This not only reinforces Leach's viewpoint as to the absence of all but the most superficial of political themes, but also clearly demonstrates what Wilson before him only intimated: the distinction drawn between that which is political -- weighty, didactic, thought-provoking -- and that which is entertaining -- light-hearted, inconsequential, diversionary.

A former employee at SABC-TV, who had also been a post-graduate student under Sargeant at Rhodes University, describes the atmosphere of the English television drama department during the five-year period between 1982 and 1987 as

all very cosy.... It's Ken and Roy and the drama department -- well, Roy Sargeant was the drama department at the time.... And it was, So what do we do in our classics slot this year, our big prestige drama? We'll do something safe and prestigious -- we'll do a Shakespeare.

Her opinion that Sargeant is "an appallingly conservative man" and that Leach is "also quite conservative in terms of risk-taking, interpretation,... not very adventurous", is based on her experience in having worked closely with both of them on various drama productions including Shakespeare.

A television adaptation of one of Shakespeare's better-known plays seems to have been considered a safe bet as long

as it was presented in a straightforward and routine way and, according to Sargeant, met with much approval from the upper echelons of executive management at the SABC. Hamlet, apparently,

elicited an extremely flattering, complimentary letter from our very senior boss who was the Deputy Director General, a man called Pieter de Bruyn, a man of great cultivation, who was very very struck with it and wrote to the department saying Well done and This is the kind of thing and This is just great.

Of the eight Shakespearean productions undertaken by SABC-TV, it is significant that the only one preceded by a special introductory "chat" was A Midsummer Night's Dream, the first to be produced under Sargeant's management of English television drama. This introduction took the form of a talk given by Professor Guy Butler of the English Department at Rhodes University, a friend and ex-colleague of Sargeant's, and also an influential cultural authority on English-language literature in South Africa. The programme was filmed at Butler's home in Grahamstown and broadcast on TV1 two days before the production as part of an arts programme called Spectrum.

The notes on which Butler based his talk suggest that, for the most part, it was specifically geared to appeal to a modern (and clearly non-academic) audience. This is how it begins:

Have you ever thought of Shakespeare as a sexy playwright? Well, just look at A Midsummer Night's Dream: men and women chasing after each other, falling in and out of love from start to finish --

when no less than three couples tumble joyfully into bed. That's where it stops. It was written in the decent days before love-making became a spectator sport.

Married men: Have you, after a stormy courtship, waited passionately and impatiently for your wedding day?

[quotes extract: I. 1. 16-19]

Fathers: Have you a minor daughter besotted on [sic] a young oaf you can't abide?

[quotes extract: I. 1. 26-29]

(Butler, Notes, p. 1)

The intention, Butler says, was "to get the audience not to switch off because it was Shakespeare!" (Personal Letter, 23 January 1992, his emphasis). His "chat" concludes with a most lyrical and romantic piece of prose, whereby

Shakespeare is demonstrating that we need dreams and fantasies to find out who we are and what the world is: that civilisation itself is impossible without the operation of vision and of fantasy.... It is an extraordinary play, spanning the whole miraculous world of natural growth, of sex, of mating, and those peculiarly human activities of speaking, singing, dancing and, above all, dreaming, whereby we create worlds beyond the worlds of mere natural growth, of mere sex, of mere mating -- the serene and shining city of Athens beyond the forest: the magical forest to which we return, perhaps, every night in our sleep

(p. 6).

Sargeant had thought that this introduction would augment the production by giving viewers an advance interpretation of the play, but found that, according to official ratings and the letters sent in by viewers, it was not well-received. He says that

nobody was very impressed with it; people were not particularly interested in knowing more about the play,... perhaps it was the manner in which it was done, perhaps Guy himself was not the best

television personality.... One just always imagined that there was a great public out there waiting for information -- which there isn't. Very distressing, because one believes that the more you know about something, the more you appreciate it.

Having been so disappointed by the lack of enthusiasm exhibited by the South African viewing public, Sargeant did not suggest any similar build-up for the subsequent productions of Hamlet or The Merchant of Venice, leaving their audiences to draw their own conclusions about the value and meaning of the plays.

The decision to preface A Midsummer Night's Dream with a special introduction given by a renowned local authority contradicts the belief regarding Shakespeare -- so strongly defended and perpetuated by Sargeant, Leach et al -- that the plays are historically transcendent and their themes universal: if they are truly so, supplementary clarification should be entirely irrelevant.

Examining the BBC-Timelife productions of Shakespeare's plays directed under Cedric Messina during 1978 and 1979, James Bulman finds that they "dedicate themselves to the principle that Shakespeare, to be done right, must be done naturalistically" (p. 573). Leach's productions exemplify this underlying assumption more consistently than Bristow's do. Apart from the evidence of the productions themselves, an example of the emphasis on realism can also be picked up in the programme schedule in The Argus, which described the forthcoming attraction as follows:

The vitally imaginative production for television captures the comedy and magic of this extraordinary

play. The play is set in ancient Greece, making use of traditional Greek dancing which reaches back into centuries gone by

(28 October 1982, p. 2).

The prominence that this newspaper item gives to the music, recorded specially in Athens, and the dance routines, choreographed and performed by Greek traditional dancers, works to confer an air of authenticity on the production, and to locate its undertaking within a time-honoured history of performance.

Lindyll Roberts, set designer and unofficial art director on the productions of Hamlet and The Merchant of Venice, says that Leach's "most important consideration" was to have his version of Shakespeare on television be

as accessible as possible to the man in the street.... He wanted to make it as ordinary as possible, and his key to making it ordinary was to make it psychologically real.... He felt that the way to show it was to show people in realistic situations.

This attempt seemed to put Leach in a somewhat contradictory position: opting for traditional costumes because "some of [Shakespeare's] attraction, some of its colour, its texture, is to do with that historical context", he simultaneously recognised that the production may well become nothing but a "mantelpiece exhibit" because of its distance. His solution was, ambiguously, to "interpret it in terms of modern dynamics, but still try and retain the shell of how it existed".

After A Midsummer Night's Dream, Leach's search for realism led him to venture beyond the restrictions of the

studio to shoot some of the exterior scenes for Hamlet and The Merchant of Venice. Consequently, Denmark is represented in a very stylized way against the backdrop of an abandoned mine-dump complete with ash-heaps and cyanide-blue lakes (which also, for a South African viewer, discloses its Johannesburg location!), and Ophelia drowns among the willows for which Emmarentia Dam (a two-minute drive from the SABC's Auckland Park studios) is famous. The final scenes of The Merchant of Venice were shot on the Linksfield golf course, because, according to Roberts, "it had the right sort of trees, birch trees or something".

These naturalistic touches were intended to extend the visual depth and range of the productions but do not manage to surmount the sense of overall narrowness and interiority conveyed in part by the predominantly studio-bound filming and even more by the extensive use of close-up shots. This latter technique, which Roberts says Leach "instinctively adopted", together with an absence of contextualising or establishing shots, removes any sense that either of these dramas take place within a wider frame of reference. Here, the spatial serves as analogue for the social and the political.

As Roberts points out, the narrowness of vision

strips down some of the complexity, some of the subtlety that could otherwise be used if you were working on the wide screen or if you were going for a more esoteric, a more complex, styling of the whole thing.

The result is that the emphasis, in all of Leach's productions but especially in Hamlet, is made to fall on the personal rather than the political, and no correspondences are seen to exist between the two. The parallel with the humanistic approach to Shakespeare as represented by traditional criticism is manifest. Here, the "demands of family and state -- essentially political demands involving questions and relations of power -- are placed in an anterior relation to the autonomous consciousness of the tragic protagonist" (Drakakis, p. 7).

As far as the text is concerned, Leach saw a further opportunity to make his productions of Shakespeare more accessible by providing the modern equivalent of certain archaic or strange words. This seems to have been an idea for "improvement" that grew on him as he progressed: there is one change in A Midsummer Night's Dream, six in Hamlet, and in The Merchant of Venice there are forty-one alterations. At the beginning of I. 2. of Merchant, the lines,

It is no mean happiness, therefore, to be seated in  
the mean; superfluity comes sooner by white hairs,  
but competency lives longer,

are translated or simplified as

It is no small happiness, therefore, to have  
little; gluttony soon brings on the white hairs,  
but with moderation you'll live longer.

From the same play, other examples of the type of rewriting that was deemed necessary are "close friends" for "cater-cousins" (II. 2.), "extravagant" for "prodigal" (II. 5.),



"wondrous greetings" for "sensible regrets" (II. 9.), and "I will take what comes" for "I will assume desert" (II. 9.).

Ian Ferguson, now professor of English at the University of South Africa and, in 1982, literary adviser for SABC-TV's production of Hamlet, says that the issue of providing a modern equivalent of some of the words was one for debate between himself and Leach:

We originally worked on the text together, and at one stage Ken was debating whether one needed to modernise certain words that might sound strange, and we agreed finally that actually people don't listen to individual words -- they think they do, but they really listen to the whole context. So we in fact didn't do that, although we did do quite a lot of editing and cutting

(Personal Interview).

Ferguson's statement contradicts the evidence of the production itself, and one can only surmise that he must have forgotten the practice actually adopted. Furthermore, the fact of altering certain archaic or difficult words is at variance with Leach's own view that "all of us -- any thinking person -- can recognise somewhere the benefit of [Shakespeare], the philosophy, the poetry, the spoken word": "the spoken word" as articulated in these SABC-TV productions can no longer (if in fact it ever could) be fully attributed to Shakespeare in any case.

Leach's partial updating of Elizabethan vocabulary is not only a rather patronising attempt to usher the plays as successfully as possible into twentieth-century South

Africa, but also suggests a certain intellectual arrogance. When asked whether he had found that South African actors had specific problems with Shakespeare's language, he replied,

Incredible problems. I would venture to suggest that most of the population has a problem understanding most things. The degree of literacy is pretty low, and I'm talking about educated people. So if you're coming to something as exotic as Shakespeare, you've got an incredible problem, enormous!

The stress laid on the attempt to present Shakespeare in an "accessible" and "ordinary" way implies that, without some sort of special effort, the plays will be both inaccessible and unfamiliar. So much for historical transcendency and universality.

Apart from the changes made to much of the vocabulary, another way to overcome the problems that Leach believes "most of the population" has with Shakespeare is to reduce the length of each play fairly substantially. As discussed in the previous chapter, cutting the texts down to make them more suitable for television adaptation has become a standard procedure, but Leach has a far less squeamish attitude to this than his predecessor, Douglas Bristow, and consequently his productions are considerably condensed. Twenty-five per cent of the text of A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Merchant of Venice was removed, and fifty-three per cent of Hamlet.<sup>2</sup>

Although Leach has found that the common attitude is that "one may not tamper with the text", he justifies his

tampering by trying to identify with the type of dramatist he imagines Shakespeare to have been:

Shakespeare was a man of the theatre and he was writing very often in improvisational form and if his audience didn't like it, he threw it out. There are so many versions today, we don't even know what the definitive one was.

In this case, one wonders where the stability of the text might lie -- surely a prerequisite for the timelessness and universality attributed to it. This serves as another example of one of the contradictions involved with seeing the Shakespearean text as uniquely transcendent while simultaneously needing to find a convenient explanation for altering it.

The result is that the plays he has adapted and produced for television, then, are highly abridged versions. The majority of the lines which have been removed are those which are not seen to forward the action of what is taken to be the basic plot. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, Hippolyta's role is kept to a minimum; the hunting scene in IV. 1. is deleted; and so are much of the lovers' praises and denunciations of each other.

In The Merchant of Venice, speeches which were considered extraneous enough to cut include the Prince of Arragon's address on how those in high places abuse their privileges and corrupt the concept of "honour" (II. 9.), and Bassanio's discourse about vice parading as virtue (III. 2.). For at least one critic, this production "was less than satisfying. The play had been gutted by the removal of some

of the crucial speeches. A dislocation in meaning was the inevitable result" (Semple, 'Shakespeare Festival', p. 108).

Leach's production of Hamlet offers the most truncated version of all the eight Shakespeare plays produced by the SABC. The entire subplot concerning Rozencrantz and Guildenstern has been reduced to the extent that the impact of their treachery is drastically diminished, and Gertrude's comment that "The lady doth protest too much, methinks", is made a mockery of as the Player Queen speaks less than a third of her original lines. Another example of the compression of this play is in Act IV, where the sixth and seventh scenes have been merged into each other to communicate a sense of linearity: the camera's close-up of Hamlet's letter to Horatio is transposed onto a similarly visual close-up of his letter to Claudius, thereby cutting the escalation of Laertes' desire for revenge which so strongly motivates the dénouement of the drama.

As mentioned earlier, Ian Ferguson, of the University of South Africa, was brought in to work on the television adaptation of the text of Hamlet, although Leach, in describing the cutting process, implies that the real decisions were mainly his own:

Trying to cut Hamlet, what a nightmare! I got to a point where I had a good feel for the script but I couldn't cut anything, everything seemed to relate to something else, so out of desperation I used to have a whiskey or two until I began to feel much braver, and then I'd sit down and start cutting and then the next day I'd go back to it and think, Oh fuck, what have I done? But, in a way, that process worked because what I was doing was freeing myself from inhibition, and I was looking at it afresh.

Ferguson says that "the basis of [his] cutting would be to cut jokes that are obscure,... and lines that puzzle the will -- you know, we do have problems with certain words, what do they really mean?", although he himself acknowledges that many more lines were cut from the text after he had finished making his suggestions.

Neither Ferguson nor Leach are in favour of rearranging the sequence of scenes if it can be avoided. With Hamlet, internal restructuring of the play has been kept to a minimum, with a split between Scenes 2 and 3 in Act I, and another between Scenes 2 and 3 in Act III. Leach, in fact, believes that the task of adapting a play by Shakespeare into a television text is made easier because "[his] style is very dynamic: it's a montage of scene after scene, he moves without curtains falling". This fits in so well with the requirements of a television script that he is prompted to add that "if [Shakespeare] was writing today, he would be a television writer, I hate to say".

Within this context, the question is then raised as to how vital Ferguson's collaboration on Hamlet really was. Leach, after all, had managed on his own with A Midsummer Night's Dream a year earlier, and it wasn't as if Bristow before him had established a practice of employing the services of an outside literary adviser. Ferguson became involved in the play through his contacts at the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal, for which he had served as a part-time literary adviser for a number of years. He also

knew Leach personally and professionally, and says that he "got into [Hamlet] because for some surprising reason they felt that they wanted somebody from the university". This explanation, together with his listing in the production's credits as "Professor" -- a title which he did not hold at that time -- provides the key to Ferguson's involvement: it suggests the desire to confer a sign of academic legitimation from which a South African television production of Shakespeare could only be seen to benefit.

The institutional restrictions which affected Leach's productions seem to have been limited, at least superficially, to the heavily bureaucratic nature of the SABC, which is the reason Lindyll Roberts gives for her resignation three years ago. For her, "it induces a numbness where you just take the path of least resistance through the whole empire". Talking about "making things happen", she says that

everything was very controlled by paperwork, by preordained systems of doing things. We couldn't for instance get in a freelance scenic artist who is really good at doing weathered finishes because the SABC use their staff and bad luck for you if they happen to employ house painters to do their scenic painting. I had to bear that in mind as a set designer.

From a slightly different perspective, Leach acknowledges that the production of drama programmes for SABC-TV is "dictated by a lot of compromise,...economics, all those things".<sup>3</sup> Also, when it comes to casting, Leach, like

Bristow, found that the size of the acting profession in South Africa circumscribes choice, saying

I will probably shock you when I tell you that you look around and see what actors are available out of those who have done Shakespeare before, can do Shakespeare, have a modicum of understanding and who fit the part physically -- those are the kind of very basic motivating influences.

Sargeant says that he and Leach made decisions about the casts together and, in his opinion, they were able to work with "superb actors, basically the best in the country". In contradiction to this, he later admits that Andrew Buckland as Hamlet was "something of a miss-shot", and admits that Annelisa Weiland as Ophelia was "awful". Information from another source suggests that she landed the part because of her personal involvement with one of the senior members of the production team -- probably not an uncommon occurrence in any line of work but one for which, in this case, the South African viewing public had to pay the price!

The choice of A Midsummer Night's Dream in 1982 for television adaptation gave Leach the opportunity to display more sophisticated techniques of filming and special effects than most previous programmes produced by the SABC-TV drama departments. Supernatural elements, such as Puck's vanishing acts and the invisibility that Oberon is able to assume, are portrayed in ways which take greater advantage of the camera's potential than, for instance, Bristow's depiction of the witches in Macbeth. SABC-TV's technical staff were clearly becoming more proficient with experience, and Leach's

production of A Midsummer Night's Dream provides evidence of this general progress.

In Sheldon Zitner's view, the

main problems for television adaptation of Shakespeare ... are the more obvious ones of transferring plays written for a highly stylized stage to a medium whose typical visual imagery is more realistic in detail and effect, and whose visual and emotional frames are much more restricted. The mobility of the camera and the possibilities of realistic spectacle create a dilemma for both film and television

(p. 35).

There is the temptation to employ special video techniques to achieve "realistically magical" effects, and the effort to do so works to position the television text at a higher and more self-conscious level than the stage production in terms of technical possibilities and finesse.

As was seen in Bristow's productions of Shakespeare, it has become a popular practice to accentuate the lower-class positions of characters textually represented as socially subordinate by portraying them with accents which clearly deviate from the "standard". In one case, the result is particularly significant. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, Bottom is played by the prominent Afrikaans actor Marius Weyers who, in this instance, not only makes no effort to conceal his accent but actually emphasises it. This is a break from the norm because, while regional British accents have been familiarised in South African television drama productions, a specifically Afrikaans one (as differentiated from "standard" South African) seldom has, and certainly not



in conjunction with Shakespeare. As William Quince points out, "it seems appropriate in view of the lingering feeling of cultural superiority on the part of English-speaking whites that the one role played by an Afrikaans actor should be Bottom, the jackass" (pp. 45-6).

In The Merchant of Venice, the Prince of Arragon as a member of European royalty, is, obviously, a man of elevated social standing. While his haughtiness does not inspire sympathy ("I will not ... rank me with the barbarous multitudes"), nothing in the representation of this character indicates that he is to be thought of or treated as anything less than a nobleman. In Leach's production, however, Arragon -- played by Franz Dobrowsky with a strong Portuguese accent, a lisp, and a moustache as big as a broom -- is made to look ridiculous. Ethnocentric "jokes" about the Portuguese community in South Africa are not uncommon among "Anglo-Saxons", and Dobrowsky's portrayal of Arragon runs the risk of encouraging an audience which takes pleasure in this type of humour to laugh.

In connection with the use of particular or regional accents, a comment by Ian Ferguson reveals how, behind the supposed intention of localising a production of Shakespeare, this type of representation plays on social stereotyping in a way that takes full advantage of the ingrained prejudices found in South African society. He was referring specifically to Dobrowsky as Arragon when he said that

I think this was part of the idea to make it local: rather than have an imitated Warwickshire accent,

use a local one,... which I quite like.... We never think of using Indians, for example, I think it could be quite amusing to do a production like Much Ado About Nothing using Dogberry and Verges as Indians -- why not? Might be fun, might even make it more accessible.

Ferguson's use of the pronoun "we" unconsciously reveals the assumption that, when it comes to the SABC, the production of television programmes and the decision-making processes behind that production are firmly in the hands of whites. Also, if the means of achieving an increased sense of accessibility for Shakespeare is so closely linked to profiting from the frequent representation of minority groups (Afrikaans, Indian, Portuguese) in roles that provoke the laughter and ridicule of the dominant social classes, the audience is clearly positioned as predominantly white, English-speaking, and -- as it's Shakespeare they're watching -- intelligent. It would seem to be something of a contradiction for Ferguson to suggest that an audience of this nature would need its Shakespeare made more accessible by any means.

Black actors are employed for the first time in a South African television production of Shakespeare in The Merchant of Venice in 1987. The Prince of Morocco ("Mislike me not for my complexion"), is played by a "coloured" actor, Bill Curry, and, of the few "handmaidens" allocated to Portia who scurry around filling her bath in I. 2. (set in her sumptuous bathroom), two are played by young black women. (Along with other actors in unspecified roles as "extras", they have not been listed by name in the credits).

This admittance of an aspect of South African "reality" -- previously excluded from television productions of Shakespeare -- is significant for the way it reinforces some of the particular social relations which obtain in this country. The seeming egalitarianism of the choice of black actors for parts in a production of Shakespeare by the English drama department of SABC-TV is undermined by the very nature of those parts, which places blacks in socially subservient and familiar positions which are, therefore, acceptable to whites. The silent handmaidens humbly observe the master-servant relationship, and Morocco is black because that is what the role will allow: a "non-white".<sup>5</sup> Portia's hope that "all of his complexion" choose the wrong casket, spoken with evident scorn and relief, would carry particular significance for a South African audience.

According to Roy Sargeant, the SABC-TV production of Hamlet was "vastly successful in terms of public response,... most extraordinary response from the ordinary television viewer who suddenly thought that this might be better than Dallas!". The surprise registered by Sargeant seems unwarranted in the light of the production's slant towards Hamlet's existentialist angst and its causes: this Hamlet merely works to confirm the tenets of traditional idealist criticism which have predominantly underpinned the teaching of literature in South African educational institutions to date.

From the opening scene of the drama, what has been construed as the play's fundamental tension is established,

whereby, at the king's funeral, a shot/reverse shot of Hamlet and Gertrude shows the exchange of "meaningful" eye contact. This builds to a climax in IV. 3., which is set in Gertrude's bed-chamber, an opulent room redolent of self-indulgence and licentiousness with its mirrors, rich tapestries and plush double bed. Roberts says that Leach chose this setting

to sort of hone in psychologically on how vulnerable she was, how incestuous their relationship is. And that's what I mean by reality ... in other words, taking today's psychology back to that period and filling it out there so that you can have them play it out in the bedroom.

Applying modern psychology to Elizabethan drama seems to be a favourite approach, and one that he expanded on in The Merchant of Venice.

In 1986, Leach directed a stage production of this play for the Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State in Bloemfontein, and the following year directed it for television in Johannesburg with the same cast, working on a freelance basis for the SABC at this stage. The idea, he says, "was to transplant it in a way that obviously didn't modify for television".

The convenience of transferring the recent Bloemfontein production to Studio Five in Auckland Park was too great a temptation to resist, and must have filled the English drama department's "classics slot" in a most opportune way. Sargeant says that "we did Merchant because I was very eager to put that cast together. It seemed to be such a superb cast, and it was such a tangibly luscious production. I like

it best of all, other than Dream". This enthusiasm must have gone some way to generating the comparatively high budget that The Merchant of Venice was allocated: the sets cost approximately R120,000, and Sargeant estimates that the production as a whole cost around a quarter of a million rand.

From a practical point of view, the production may have been a good choice for television adaptation that year, although the producers must have been aware that the play's (potentially) anti-semitic slant might have been a problematic issue. South Africa has a large and influential Jewish community which could well have felt insulted by the very choice of the production. Sargeant, however, maintains that the play "is so ambiguous, it can move from one side of the line to the other", and so sees its social resonances as open to interpretation rather than as explicit or absolute in any way. In spite of this, Roberts says that she remembers

some controversy with regards to anti-semitism, and once again it was merely safer, less direct, to keep it in a period setting, period context, and say, Well, that was there and then. Anti-semitism is not necessarily ours.<sup>6</sup>

Relating to this, Phillip Elliott, looking at the production of drama for British television, has noted that

considerable attention is paid to "authenticity" -- getting the period and setting right. The way "authenticity" functions as a professional value ... seems to be most apparent in those historical series where it provides a cover for making points, for example, about the radicalism of the working class, which would not be allowed in any contemporary context

(p. 165).

Even if it had been a conscious concern on Leach's part to distance the issue of religious and racial bigotry from twentieth-century South Africa by visually locating the production in the remote past, the representation of Shylock works to subvert that attempt. Played by Richard Haines, Shylock is dressed in black, full-length gaberdine robes, has long, untidy hair, a hooked nose, walks with a stoop, and speaks with a Yiddish accent. According to Alfred Rubens's A History of Jewish Costume, Shylock's costume is not wholly historically inauthentic as Jewish males in most parts of western Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would have worn long, black burnous (cloaks) over tunics and drawers (p. 118). Also distinctive were the Jüdenkragen (ruff) and the barrette (round black hat). In the Papal States Jews were required by church edict in 1555 to wear a green barrette out of doors, although they were allowed to wear a black one in towns where they were accustomed to trade. In Venice, specifically, a Jüdenhut (yellow, pointed hat) was obligatory (p. 120). These dress codes remained in effect until the eighteenth century. Reproductions of paintings and engravings in Rubens's book also indicate that affluent Jews would have been extremely well-turned out.

Haines's Shylock, by comparison, is a shabby, wretched old-ish man, without any of the trappings his wealth would have afforded him and without the barrette and starched ruff which would have fully legitimated the production's "period setting". His costume, then, is only partially "authentic",

and its drabness, together with Haines's accent and large latex nose, work to signify "Jewishness" in a way that takes advantage of modern stereotypes and prejudices. Furthermore, as Hilary Semple points out, the cutting of Shylock's extenuatory analogy about Jacob and Laban in I. 3. portrays him as nothing more than "a stereotype Jewish moneylender intent on extortion for no other reason than avarice and anti-Christian vindictiveness" ('Shakespeare Festival', p. 108).

In this light, it is difficult to see how SABC-TV's production of The Merchant of Venice supports Sargeant's perception that the play is ambiguous. This, however, is not to suggest that it was Leach's intention to offend; indeed, he appears to have avoided the problem altogether. In support of this, it seems appropriate to quote the comments of a senior crew member (who asked to remain anonymous):

I was quite disappointed in that I felt there was a lack of directorial concept or vision, from Ken, in the directing of this. Technically he was fine ... but in terms of having an interpretation of the script -- I didn't think there was one at all, and I thought that this bid for a wide market, a wide appeal, just because that's what you do....

In fact when I asked some of the actors how they felt about Ken as a director, [one of them] said, What direction? We were just left to our own devices.

This is very bitchy now but I think it might be very interesting ... to bear in mind, how Shakespeare is interpreted in television -- you know, is there any interpretation at all or is the stuff so sacrosanct that it's just put out?

This rhetorical question has a concrete answer in the six productions directed by Leach and Bristow. Neither the

interpretation of the Shakespearean texts nor the meanings inscribed into the productions are arbitrary or simply inherent in the television texts themselves. Possibilities of meaning, Graham Holderness has said, are

manipulated, appropriated and practically applied in criticism and theoretical analysis, in performance and adaptation;... as they are used and exploited to serve various different and conflicting ideological ends; they become unquestionably, in the broadest sense, political  
(Shakespeare's History, p. 147).

Together, these South African television productions of Shakespeare have established a highly formulaic approach in terms of interpretation and modes of representation. It is to be hoped that these forms are not so firmly entrenched as to have become prescriptive.



## CHAPTER FOUR

All with me's meet that I can fashion fit  
King Lear

Apart from the six productions of Shakespeare designed and directed by Douglas Bristow and Ken Leach specifically for television, there are two South African television productions which did not have their origins in a studio but in a theatre.<sup>1</sup> The first of these is Romeo en Juliet, an Afrikaans production staged by the Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State (PACOFs) in 1981 at the Civic Theatre in Bloemfontein. It was filmed for television by an independent director, Dirk de Villiers of C-Films, and broadcast on TV1 on 14 June 1982. The second stage-into-television production was The Winter's Tale, produced by the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (PACT) in April 1988 and performed at the Alexander Theatre in Johannesburg. Under the direction of Bobby Heaney, the play's stage director, it was filmed by SABC-TV and broadcast on TV1 on 28 August 1988.<sup>2</sup>

For SABC-TV, the advantages of this type of productional collaboration are manifold: it is able to meet the expectations of that small section of its audience -- who, it has been claimed, "need" Shakespeare -- by presenting a prestigious production which, as such, also reflects well on the corporation, while, at the same time, saving itself the effort and expense of mounting a studio production. In

commissioning C-Films to film Romeo en Juliet and in organising a small technical crew to film The Winter's Tale, SABC-TV was able to reduce the financial outlay normally required for one-off drama productions by more than half. The financial costs involved in organising and constructing sets, design, costumes, etc, and the time and trouble it takes to put a cast together were the responsibilities of the respective performing arts councils.

Leaving aside an audience's opinion as to the technical quality and productional merit of these productions, there appear to be advantages all round. PACOFS and PACT would profit from increased public exposure; Dirk de Villiers and his company also gain publicity and financial profit; the actors receive financial remuneration over and above their usual acting fees, and their exposure on national television adds to their reputations.

The 1981 production of Romeo en Juliet, based on a translation by André Brink (1975) and directed for PACOFS by Sandra Kotzé, takes its place in a long history of translation and performance of Shakespeare in other languages in South Africa. Apart from Afrikaans, these also include Southern Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa, Ndonga, Venda, Northern Sotho, Tswana and Tsonga.<sup>3</sup> Although Shakespeare in educational syllabuses is usually prescribed for study in English, translations are appearing more regularly on setwork lists for senior secondary students, although, as far as "white" government schools are concerned, these are generally in Afrikaans.

William Quince's study of the history of Shakespearean performance in South Africa, while not taking the SABC/PACOFs production of Romeo en Juliet into account, nevertheless shows that there is a well-established tradition of Afrikaans translations and stage productions. The first full-length performance of Shakespeare in Afrikaans was a production of Hamlet, translated in 1945 by Professor L.I. Coertze, and performed in 1947 at His Majesty's Theatre in Johannesburg. Within the context of the massive resurgence of Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa, which culminated in the National Party's election to power in 1948, this timely production was "enormously important in validating Afrikaner culture by conferring on it the great prestige of Shakespeare" (Quince, p. 50).

Similarly, PACOFs's choice of Romeo en Juliet for production and the subsequent broadcast by the Afrikaans television drama department of the SABC can be seen as an example of a bit of cultural muscle-flexing. Kotzé says that the play was chosen because it was a setwork for matric students under the Orange Free State Education department in 1982.<sup>4</sup> Although the play was set for study in English, PACOFs decided to use Brink's 1975 Afrikaans translation because, according to Kotzé, this was a way of catering for the Free State's predominantly Afrikaans-speaking students who, it was felt, would find Shakespeare "easier to understand if they could come to it through their own language first".

Romeo en Juliet was filmed for television on the initiative of Dirk de Villiers, a film director with little previous television experience. In spite of this, he says, his proposals to PACOFS and the Afrikaans drama department at SABC-TV were immediately accepted. De Villiers's decision to get involved in this production appears to have been based primarily on his personal friendships with members of the cast and crew, although he also says that he thought it was an "important" play, and so, "while the production was there" and "they all knew their lines", he took the opportunity to film it. In an earlier interview, de Villiers suggested that the undertaking was something of a cultural mission when he said, "Afrikaans lends itself to Shakespeare.... I suppose in a way I'm doing it to honour the taal -- show people what can be done" (quoted in Davis, p. 7).

Romeo en Juliet is a much shorter Shakespeare production than any of those directed by Bristow or Leach, but what it lacks in quantity, it more than compensates for in exceptionally professional camera and editing techniques, giving substance to the generally-held perception that Afrikaans drama productions have always been superior to those produced by SABC-TV's English drama department. De Villiers claims that his previous experience in theatre was of advantage when planning the direction but, apart from pointing out that

you need to be clever, you know,... there's a certain technique, a style, you've got to adapt for television,... you can't just go there and put a wide angle lens on and shoot the bloody thing,

he has tended to minimise any significant difficulties that might be involved in filming a stage production. Some additional sets were built and extra lighting was needed, but de Villiers used only one camera and completed filming in just ten days.

Kotzé's stage production was a sumptuous one, with extravagantly-detailed "traditional" seventeenth-century costumes, intricately-designed sets, and a large cast. The television version is short because she had already cut some of the text in planning the stage production, and de Villiers, when filming, cut even more: "just ... a few of the scenes which I thought were a bit superfluous to tell the story". It is impossible to determine which cuts or directorial decisions can be attributed to Kotzé and which to de Villiers, but the final result of the co-production is a television text which magnifies the elements of romance, intrigue and melodrama within the play in classic soap opera-style narration. The extensive use of naturalised camera angles (close-ups, medium close-ups, two-shots and shot/reverse shots), combined with the lavish *mise en scène*, opulent costumes, and the conventional physical beauty of the leading actors, work to emphasise the passion and the "love interest". De Villiers's "story" excludes any interrogation of social or political issues, such as the authority of patriarchy, its *modus operandi*, and its ultimate destructiveness.

Two reviews of Romeo en Juliet in major Afrikaans newspapers, while at odds with each other as far as the aesthetic and theatrical merits of the production are concerned, nevertheless both reveal that a Shakespearean production is expected to be as "realistic" as possible, and that it is best judged according to the level of authenticity that it achieves. For Herman Toerien, this "evergreen love story" is a "convincing presentation", made no less so by taking into account the wound that one of the actors' received during the swordplay scene (in Die Volksblad, p. 3). For Ian Ferguson, on the other hand, the only aspect of this production that measured up in terms of authenticity was its "High-Renaissance style", and he concludes that

it doesn't look as if we in South Africa can produce the classics with the immediacy and vitality with which the British and Germans do them today -- not to talk about interpretation (in Rapport, p. 40, my translation).

Ferguson at least pays some attention to the fact that Romeo en Juliet was adapted for television from a stage production, even though he chooses to class it with Orson Welles's 1948 production of Macbeth, which, apparently, was "criticised the world over for its high-flown, overly-theatrical presentation and ridiculous sets" (p. 40). Romeo en Juliet, he comments, fell into the "pot-hole" of visual problems, whereby "what looks good on the stage ... is frequently noisy, overcrowded and sometimes confused on the screen". As discussed in Chapter Three, Ferguson was involved in Ken Leach's production of Hamlet for SABC-TV,

which was broadcast the year following this review, and he was also to work on the SABC/PACT co-production of The Winter's Tale six years later. It is interesting to note that Tale, a far less satisfactory stage-into-television production than Romeo en Juliet in terms of filming and editing techniques, receives much more tactful treatment from Ferguson when discussing the inherent shortcomings of such an undertaking!

Of the SABC's eight Shakespeare productions, Romeo en Juliet has proved to be the most difficult to obtain a copy of as well as information about. Many SABC-TV staff were surprised when informed of its existence, and even the head of the television purchasing administration department had no record of it. It is also the only local television production of Shakespeare which has not been released on video for purchase.<sup>5</sup>

According to Brink, this is because of a prolonged feud between himself and the SABC around the time the production was broadcast in 1982. The feud involved the banning of Brink's work from SABC-TV for, in his words, "political reasons". Even though he says he was not apprised of the SABC's plan to broadcast Romeo en Juliet, he implied that, if he had been, he would have refused to give his permission, "to return the compliment" (Telephonic Interview).<sup>6</sup>

That it happened in spite of the "mutual ban" was, according to Brink, due to the negligence of the Dramatic, Artistic and Literary Rights Organisation (Dalro). After

having had the production "just sprung" on him, Brink relates,

I phoned Dalro about it and asked if the SABC had contacted them, and they said No. So I wrote a furious letter to the SABC only to discover later in a very contrite letter from Dalro that they had in fact given permission but they had omitted to ask mine, so there was a total mix-up with that  
(Personal Interview).

Although the SABC had not legally contravened Brink's right of authorship as far as the broadcast was concerned, he feels that the production must have been excluded from video release "because of the mutual ban at the time, and [as] a result of the rumpus following the broadcast.... I presume that after that the SABC just assumed that they wouldn't be allowed to". In spite of the confusion, and the programme having been broadcast without his consent, Brink says he "was thrilled with the production ... [and] thought it was very well done", and some mellowing on his part leads him to consider "contact[ing] them [the SABC] now to find out if they would be prepared to release it on video".

Speaking to a large number of SABC-TV personnel and independent producers about their involvement with or opinions on local television productions of Shakespeare has revealed the ethnocentric -- and apparently prevalent -- perception on the part of English-speaking South Africans that a production of Shakespeare in another language, which is and yet simultaneously is not Shakespeare, cannot be viewed with quite the same sense of pride and proprietorship as a production in English. In connection with this, and



with specific reference to Afrikaans translation and production, it is worth noting the opinion of M.M. Mahood, the British academic whose point of view so clearly supported the ideological impetus of the Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa:

When I first visited South Africa thirty-five years ago, an academic debate was raging round the first translation of Hamlet into Afrikaans: could the speech of the sixteenth century, charged as it is with literary associations, be transposed into a language that had come into existence so much later? I thought then, and still think, that such misgivings have no sound linguistic basis, and that everyone has the right to Shakespeare in his mother tongue [sic]. Ideally, the translation ought to be done by poets of the calibre of Boris Pasternak and Uys Krige. Yet both Krige and Pasternak would readily admit that a translation cannot capture all the resonances of the original, nor all its subtleties of rhythm and euphony. Because of this shortfall, the original, imperfectly understood, can perhaps generate a more profound theatrical experience than a perfectly understood translation (p. 3).

Brink, who has also translated Richard III and The Comedy of Errors into Afrikaans -- the former on commission for the Performing Arts Council of the Cape in 1969, and the latter for PACT a year later -- discusses how the language was in the process of internationalising itself during the 1960s and 1970s: it was a period "of enormous translating activity [with] a whole flood of translations of fiction, from a variety of languages, and it happened in drama too" (Personal Interview). As far as the state-funded performing arts councils were concerned, Brink feels they made

a deliberate attempt to stimulate theatre writing in Afrikaans because it was still in very bad shape

then.... There was a feeling that somehow Afrikaans drama should start catching up, so I think it was part of that. At that stage, there had been very few translations of Shakespeare into Afrikaans but there was a feeling that the status or the level reached by a language is measured by what it can do with Shakespeare.

The appropriation of Shakespeare -- here, by a different language and culture as much as a theatre company and a broadcasting institution -- is seen once again to confer honour, prestige and validity on (and by) those who use its connotations of literary, dramatic, cultural supremacy to their advantage.

In 1987, after the co-production of Romeo en Juliet and a number of other televised stage productions, the SABC's Annual Report states that

[d]uring the past year the SABC was once again made very aware of what its listeners and viewers expect with regard to the promotion of culture. The SABC sees its task as that of being a propagator and creator of culture. To enable it to carry out this task still further, the SABC has now begun to present programmes that are performed by arts councils in large centres. By broadcasting these performances the SABC contributes to the introduction of cultural programmes to a wider audience throughout South Africa

(p. 7).

Shortly after this declaration, which amounts to an acknowledgement of -- or at least a very strong bid for -- cultural authority and domination behind the guise of vigilant social concern and responsibility, the SABC undertook to televise PACT's production of The Winter's Tale. The motivation to do so, however, must also be seen in the context of the institution's financial straits (an effect of

the wider economic recession), and mentioned in the Chairman's Report (in the same Annual Report quoted from above), whereby the "difficult financial position of the SABC was emphasised in the previous Report" (p. 5).

Not everyone at SABC-TV who was involved in the televising of The Winter's Tale agrees with Paul Kemp, co-producer of the production, who claims (understandably) that they had "a very positive response" and "picked up very good feedback". Nevertheless, nobody tries to hide the fact that the motivating factor for an out-of-studio production of Shakespeare was primarily an economical one. Robin Knox-Grant, general manager of television programme production, says that

we did it that way for reasons of cost -- it was a compromise, an opportunity to do Shakespeare, to give South African talent the opportunity of being exposed in a context of Shakespeare to South African television audiences. Ideally I think we would like to have done it in one of our own studios as we did previously, but it's very expensive.

Clive Rodel of the English television drama department is more plain-spoken about the decision and the motivation behind it:

we got a directive, as we tend to get directives, from someone on high, who decided that shooting theatre pieces would be cheaper than actually making television drama ... so that kind of got the ball rolling.

Preceded by Romeo en Juliet six years earlier, The Winter's Tale was of course not the first stage production of

Shakespeare to be televised by SABC-TV, even though the above comments by Kemp, Knox-Grant and Rodel suggest that they believed it was. It was, however, the first such production to be undertaken by the English drama team, all of whose previous productions of Shakespeare had been undertaken especially (and proudly) for television. As with the production of other television material at SABC-TV, the production of English and Afrikaans drama programmes were -- and, to a large extent, continue to be -- separate concerns within the institution, managed by departments independent of each other for broadcast in correspondingly discrete scheduling segments. Romeo en Juliet, therefore, does not form part of the history of English television production and consequently tends to be overlooked, even by members within the same organisation.

PACT's stage production of The Winter's Tale premiered on 29 April 1988 at the Alexander Theatre in Johannesburg. It was hosted by the Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa, with Professor Guy Butler giving an introductory address, and the presence of glamorous local television and theatre personalities helped turn this first-night into a gala occasion.

The play was chosen by PACT because it was on the syllabus for white Transvaal matric students that year. Within the context of the Shakespeare Society's objective of maintaining English culture as a dominant force in southern Africa, the production presented "an interesting intersection of state and English establishment interests" (Orkin, Drama

and the South African State, p. 242). It was a celebration of Shakespeare, via state-regulated education, state-subsidised performance and association with British cultural heritage, as a symbol of ruling class hegemony.

With the exception of Butler's address, which was screened the next day on TV1 with brief coverage of the production, SABC-TV's televised version (also directed by Bobby Heaney) incorporated many other aspects of the premiere performance, both on and off-stage. A high-angle shot revealed the celebrities and other patrons milling around in the foyer before the show; the actors were filmed in their dressing-rooms in various stages of preparation, and the audience members were seen entering the auditorium and taking their seats in the theatre. Unlike the earlier production of Romeo en Juliet, The Winter's Tale was filmed for television as a self-consciously theatrical and public event.<sup>7</sup>

The attempt to adapt a stage production for television does not always achieve the professional and polished results that de Villiers's Romeo en Juliet did. The evidence of The Winter's Tale, in fact, suggests that any technical problems involved in the often formidable attempt to turn successful theatre into successful television are seen as secondary to the objective of getting Shakespeare on the screen.<sup>8</sup> In support of this, Ken Leach, as executive producer of The Winter's Tale and the then-manager of SABC-TV's English drama department, has said that "Shakespeare -- if all else dies -- should always be done somewhere, somehow", and adds that "I

don't care what you do with it as long as you expose the people to it".

Whether or not it is possible for an attempted synthesis of the codes and conventions of theatre with those of television to produce satisfactory television presentation is open to debate. The defensiveness with which Knox-Grant, Rodel and Kemp have tried to justify the type of low-cost production that The Winter's Tale constitutes tends to draw one's attention to the questionable judgement of everyone concerned in the conception of the play as a television-as-stage presentation.

Filming "live" (even though shooting was actually done over three separate performances), means that any potential problems on the technical level tend to become a reality. The movement of the cameras, for example, is restricted because of the relationship between audience and stage: three cameras were used, and they remained in fixed positions on the left-hand side of the stage throughout. Consequently, there could be no manoeuvring between the actors while they performed, and no tracking shots were possible. Interspersed with fairly regular variation -- seemingly for its own sake rather than to emphasise any particular aspect of the drama -- between close-ups and medium close-ups, are long-shots of the stage from the back of the auditorium, where the camera is positioned behind the audience. These shots mark the end of one scene and the beginning of another for the television viewer, and occasionally track in for a closer view (down the centre aisle of the theatre) when, for

instance, the shepherds and shepherdesses take up the whole stage with a dance routine.

The overall sense of unnaturalness and inflexibility that this style of filming lends to a production is heightened by the bad quality of sound. Microphones are strategically hung above the stage but do not always catch the voice of a speaking actor properly, and the words are lost altogether if he or she happens to turn away from the mike. From an actor's point of view, having to modulate a performance to simultaneously suit both a theatre and a television audience can be awkward. John van Zyl notes that the actors in The Winter's Tale were asked to "tone down" their styles of acting while the play was being filmed, which apparently "resulted in a rather muted evening's entertainment for the audience present" ('A Thrice-Told Tale', p. 100).

A second highly problematic aspect of filming stage productions as stage productions is that the inclusion within the final television text of the original theatre audience and its response to the play (laughter, clapping, etc) creates problems for the viewer at home as far as his or her sense of audience position is concerned. With The Winter's Tale, the occasional long-shots of the stage (similar to the establishing shot found in classic film narration) seem to be an attempt to locate the viewer as part of the theatre audience, since they offer the same uninterrupted view of the stage that the audience would have. These shots, however, catch the heads of the audience members at the bottom of each

frame, thereby reminding the viewer that he or she is actually watching the theatre audience watching the performance.

The consequent ambiguity of the position of the viewer-as-subject, which van Zyl has emphasised (p. 100), is further compounded by other aspects of this particular stage production, which presumably work well in their theatrical context but which, when handled by the camera, contribute to the sense of distance or dislocation. For example, the common dramatic technique whereby an actor addresses his or her asides directly to the audience loses its efficacy for the television viewer when all that the camera can offer is a profile or semi-profile shot of that actor, speaking to a point beyond the camera. In Chapter Two, it was noted how Douglas Bristow makes use of the technique of direct address in his productions of Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night to achieve particular meaning. In the televised production of The Winter's Tale, however, where the actors do not directly address the camera, any special emphasis is lost, and the television viewer is once again placed at a second remove.

Another aspect of this production which complicates the viewer's position as subject is the way the camera has recorded the cabaret routine that marks Autolycus's first appearance on stage. Played by Toby Cronjé, a very popular South African comic actor and well-known television and stage personality, the character of Autolycus is less Autolycus than he is Toby Cronjé-as-Autolycus (van Zyl, p. 101). The



nature of Cronjé's performance clearly expects the audience to respond to him as local "funny-man". His first song takes the form of a jazzy cabaret number complete with spotlight and hand-held microphone, and ends with him jumping off the stage and shaking hands with members of the audience in the front row. Recorded in full by the camera to the accompaniment of screams of laughter from the audience, this "diversion" works to situate the television viewer outside of the feeling of participation that Cronjé's act clearly inspires in the audience. Watching him step over the boundaries of the conventions of drama -- literally out of the play and into the audience -- makes any identification with that audience impossible for the television viewer, and further complicates the already ambiguous position he or she has been placed in.

Originally a PACT stage production, The Winter's Tale and the particular interpretation given to it cannot be ascribed to the SABC. However, although PACT and the SABC are separate organisations, they are both ultimately associated with the promotion of hegemonic interests. Both receive (or have, in the past) subsidies from the state government, and PACT's choice of plays for performance which supports white education syllabuses and excludes others leads Orkin to comment that

this evidence of bias is perhaps not surprising for a subsidised theatre company which has for nearly three decades operated in complete subservience to those discursive formations in the matter of theatre preferred by the state

(Drama and the South African State, p. 244).

The similarities with the SABC's practices and the content of its television material (drama and otherwise) are obvious.

The ideological congruence is demonstrated by their collaboration on this project. In the unlikely event that Bobby Heaney, for PACT, had presented a version of The Winter's Tale that did not support a traditional reading of the play in accordance with the accepted norms of establishment theatre, the production would not have been considered suitable material for broadcast on national television, as a later discussion of Othello and Die Storm (The Tempest) will show.

The Winter's Tale displays two different and contradictory approaches to the way in which Shakespeare is produced in South Africa. The Sicilian scenes, with the elaborate costumes and formal acting styles of the actors and the austerity of the all-white sets, are characterised by the unwritten (and apparently general) principle that Shakespeare, to be done "correctly", should imitate British standards of style, speech and presentation.

The Bohemian scenes, in marked contrast, point to the conscious effort to simultaneously localise and modernise Shakespeare. Autolycus's cabaret routine has already been noted and, similarly, his second "number" in Act IV has been turned into a form of popularised or cross-over jazz. The representation of the satyrs (played by one white and two black men) also has a large part in providing this semi-updated version of Shakespeare. While costumed, in

accordance with classical convention, like "goats", in fleecy cothurnus and lambs'-wool loin-cloths with horns on their heads, their performance simulates African gumboot dancing and yet carries strong sexual overtones. This unexpected inclusion of contemporary African music and the satyrs' suggestive moves proved to be very popular with the stage audience.

The novelty and "shock value" of incorporating local and twentieth-century cultural practices into an otherwise traditional production of Shakespeare seems to have outweighed any consideration as to whether or not they are coherent within the overall conception of the production. In connection with this, Ian Ferguson, involved in The Winter's Tale as literary advisor (as with Hamlet five years earlier), while not objecting to the use of modern or localised touches, comments that, "if you're going to do that, you've got to be brave and go for it, and don't try to do a little bit of it to entertain people and then switch back -- it doesn't work" (Personal Interview).

Whether this production "works" or not, it does indicate how certain assumptions about Shakespearean drama are put into practice. The Bohemian scenes are a product of the received notion that "comic relief" was specifically included in drama to cater to the alleged "groundlings" in Shakespeare's original audiences. These scenes, therefore, can be played around with or exploited in ways that the "serious" Sicilian scenes -- with their upper-class characters and upper-class concerns -- cannot.

Furthermore, even though the production divides its loyalties between traditional and modernistic styles of Shakespeare presentation, it nevertheless indicates that an attempt is being made to hybridise Shakespeare: a cross-cultural South African version appears to require Afrikaans accents, black faces, British formality, African music and a hint of classical Greek mythology. André Brink, commenting on the significance of Afrikaans productions of Shakespeare, sums up what is most likely to have been the institutional and directorial purpose behind The Winter's Tale when he says that

a number of very enterprising theatre directors have gone out of their way to demonstrate to English speakers and others the fact that Shakespeare is really the closest humanity has come to a universal artist

(Personal Interview).

In the light of the SABC's endorsement of the practice of filming stage productions for television, it is worth taking into account three productions of Shakespeare which were considered for broadcast but, for different reasons, didn't make it onto the small screen.

In September 1987, Janet Suzman directed a production of Othello which played at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. For the first time in South Africa, the role of Othello was given to a black actor, John Kani, who was paired with Joanna Weinberg as Desdemona. The production met with rave reviews and played to consistently full houses, but a great deal of its success must clearly be attributed to Suzman's daring in

casting a black man and a white woman as lovers in the context of apartheid South Africa with its history of legislation against such "immorality".

Guy Butler has said that "[a]ny production of Othello in an apartheid society is a cultural event of unusual importance" ('Editorial', 1987, p. v), but Suzman's production was important in a very special way: the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and Section 16 of the Immorality Act of 1957 had been repealed only two years before Othello opened, and many South Africans were still trying to adjust to the shock. Suzman presumably did not want her production to vanish behind its shock appeal, but she was more than well aware that it relied on the context of South African reform politics, for both legal and cultural authorisation. Her comment in an interview with the London Observer makes this clear: "our main objective was for the play to be seen as highly political today" (quoted in Paterson, p. 52).

At least one critic has considered that the production capitalised on the recent social reforms:

[t]he temptation to play to a specifically South African audience led the director into the error of allowing Othello and Desdemona to exhibit their sexual bond in public to senators and soldiers  
(Lickindorf, p. 70).

Suzman retaliates by saying this is a "patronising assumption"; the production, she says, was "a profound response to the society to which the play addressed itself", and Othello and Desdemona acted only in ways which were

"entirely consistent with the physicality of [their] relationship which was central to my understanding of the play" ('Othello: A Belated Reply', pp. 94, 96). Hilary Semple's opinion indicates a determination to concentrate less on the politically- and socially-radical implications of such an undertaking than on its theatrical or creative ones:

There can be no doubt ... that Janet Suzman's Othello was a milestone in the history of South African theatre.... It is hoped that she has inaugurated a new era for Shakespearean theatre in this country  
( 'Othello: An Historic Milestone', p. 69 ).

During its run, and with the assistance of an independent television producer, Othello was filmed and subsequently made available on video by the Market Theatre Company. On 27 December 1988, it was broadcast in Britain on the BBC's Channel 4, but it has never been screened on South African television and the SABC does not appear to have plans to do so.

According to Stephanus Venter, head of the SABC's television programme purchasing department, the video is "available to [them], but [they] are still thinking about it. [They] haven't taken a decision yet". This was in 1990, but in 1988 Suzman's story was that she would not allow it to be screened on SABC-TV because of its affiliation with National Party policy: "South African television made approaches to us, but we turned them down. [The] SABC is wholly government-owned" (quoted in Paterson, p. 55).

Contrary to what may be commonly thought, Othello does appear on the syllabuses of government-run schools in South Africa, although not with the regularity of a Hamlet or a Romeo and Juliet. That exposure to a dramatic production of a prescribed work is educational and may benefit students -- one of the reasons so frequently given by the SABC for producing and broadcasting Shakespeare -- has not yet proved a strong enough incentive to screen Suzman's Othello. If the SABC's perception of itself as the national broadcaster -- with all the responsibilities to the public that are understood to go with that paternalistically authoritative role -- will not allow condoms to be advertised on television because, according to Raymond Schenk, head of advertising acceptance, South African society is not "liberated" enough (quoted in Finance Week, 'Controversy', p. 40), there is little chance that it would deliberately associate itself with the provocative representation of a sexual relationship between a black man and a white woman.

Concern about the potential challenge that drama is capable of offering to the political or social status quo also appears to lie behind the SABC's decision not to televise Dieter Reible's 1989 production for PACT of Die Storm (an Afrikaans translation of The Tempest). According to a local arts critic, Julius Eichbaum, SABC-TV was all in favour of filming this stage production until it was decided that the representation of Caliban reflected too unfavourably on social actuality ('Radio and Television Review', p. 35). Portrayed as a black man exploited by white masters rather

than as some sort of a-human creature, Caliban's position is without ambiguity. Using the excuse that technical reasons prohibited the successful filming of this production for television, the SABC side-stepped any risk of antagonising (or enlightening?) its conservative viewers.

The SABC's decision not to screen these productions of Othello and Die Storm need not be seen to point so much to an acknowledgement on its part that Shakespeare can in fact be politically confrontational, but rather that the specific interpretations given by the plays' stage directors render them so. As far as Die Storm is concerned, Reible's characterisation of Caliban would probably represent the kind of emphasis that Roy Sargeant has referred to as "a distortion of the text", or Ronnie Wilson as "an avant garde approach", a "bending of the truth". This would not apply to Suzman's Othello because John Kani takes the role of a character who is black, but the production's engagement with contemporaneous social and political change is too strong to allow it to remain within the supposedly ideologically-neutral category of entertainment, to be seen purely as a work of dramatic fiction that in no way interacts with the social forces that provide its modern context.

CAPAB's 1990 production of Richard II, directed by the art council's drama director, Keith Grenville, is the third stage performance of a Shakespearean play whose failure to be accepted for television illuminates the SABC's attitudes towards Shakespeare. Apparently a very popular production, Richard II ran at the Nico Malan state theatre in Cape Town



for four weeks and also appeared at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival.

Grenville acknowledges that the choice of this play, which was not prescribed reading for Cape matriculation students that year, was based on his personal preference as well as the fact that it had a meagre history of production in Cape Town. There is an added responsibility, he claims, to produce a less well-known play "because it's going to be another twenty years maybe before someone thinks about doing it again".

Grenville's idea to have his production televised by the SABC was inspired partly by the earlier production of The Winter's Tale. Saying that "it's important to have a record of this sort of thing", he agrees that, had SABC-TV filmed his production, it would have reflected very well on CAPAB, himself, "and Shakespeare, obviously". From a practical point of view, Grenville feels that this production was "ideal material for television and the camera because it doesn't have those great big battle scenes and heaven knows what else".

From a different perspective, Richard II would have been entirely suitable for SABC-TV in that the interpretation given to the play accords with that maintained by previous local television productions of Shakespeare, where the emphasis is on the exploration of human nature, independent of any social or political process. For Grenville, this play is "a very intimate one. It's a history play, indeed, but it's a human drama. The fact that it's a history play is

almost beside the point" (my emphasis). Accordingly, a review of the production describes the directorial approach to the text as "straightforward" and without "nonsense" and, also taking an earlier Shakespeare production by Grenville into account (Much Ado About Nothing, 1989),<sup>9</sup> adds that "CAPAB can be relied upon to refer to the official text in future", although "it is to be hoped that they do not become too timid, too conventional, too unwilling to dream" (Mann, p. 98).

Clearly, the production offered no ideological challenge to the established orthodoxy of the production of Shakespeare in South Africa, in spite of its concerns with issues of leadership, power and authority -- now, more than ever, of crucial significance in this country.

Grenville approached SABC-TV six months before Richard II opened in Cape Town. His initial proposal was made to Ronnie Wilson, head of English programming for TV1, who subsequently passed it on to the manager of the English television drama department. The two reasons given for the refusal to undertake the project were, first, a lack of money according to the drama budgeting schedule and, second, what was considered to be the relative obscurity of the play itself.

According to Wilson, the English drama section plans its expenditure eighteen months in advance, and this Grenville finds relatively acceptable. It is the second reason, however, that is considered less than satisfactory, combined with the fact that the decision was ultimately left to one

person, the English drama manager. According to Grenville, he admitted that he himself was not familiar with the play, and in consequence considered it unlikely that a television audience would be.

The significance, then, of the SABC's rejection of Richard II as suitable television material lies predominantly in how it reveals the arbitrary nature of the decision-making process, as well as a lack of general policy as to what is acceptable for "classics" drama slots. On the one hand, Shakespeare is seen as an essential part of English drama production, necessary both for educational purposes and to meet the needs of a small but allegedly eager audience, while, on the other, it is "obscure" enough to be marginalised. If selection is based on that which it is believed an audience will already be familiar with, then the range of programmes put out by the drama department will necessarily dwindle rather than expand. Although he is no longer affiliated with the SABC, Roy Sargeant's opinion serves to indicate the circumscribed attitude and subjectivity that tends to dominate the selection of programmes by the corporation's television service when he says that, "Richard II is remote, one has to be quite honest about the canon.... I think television should keep to the well-worn tracks".

In conclusion, all that remains to be said is that there is discouragingly little on South African television that could be construed as deviating in any way from the "straight and narrow" path -- least of all Shakespeare.

## CONCLUSION

... like a barber's chair that fits all buttocks  
All's Well That Ends Well

Coinciding with the political and social reforms which have been gathering momentum in South Africa since 2 February 1990, the SABC's second television channel, TV2/3/4, changed its name to Contemporary Community Values Television from 1 January 1992. Widely promoted as a completely different station "with a mission to ignore language and colour barriers and forge a channel for the emerging 'New South Africa'" (Cape Times, 30 December 1991, p. 6), the programme schedule nevertheless reveals that it still caters predominantly for English-speaking viewers, with programmes in black vernaculars coming a poor second. Programmes in Afrikaans are not broadcast on CCV-TV at all, although the continuity announcements are made in both Afrikaans and English. The format of TV1 remains unchanged, and continues to broadcast in what remain the two "official" languages.

In the light of the Chairman's Report in the 1987 Annual Report, which states that

[the] essence of the SABC's cultural policy determines that its broadcasting services as a whole will fulfil a unicultural and multicultural role by directing some services definitely to a specific language and cultural community as a provider of knowledge, insight and entertainment, and that other services will satisfy the needs of community audiences irrespective of language and cultural boundaries

(p. 6),

the establishment of Contemporary Community Values-TV (CCV-TV) and the continuance of TV1 merely reaffirm what the institution has always understood its cultural function and responsibility to be in South Africa. It is debatable whether the "community audiences" that the SABC has in mind would readily support its claim that "in practice ... it attempts to reflect society in its full, rich spectrum of hues" (p. 7).

Internal changes at the SABC over the last few years have also deliberately been geared towards promoting a more professional and modern image for the corporation. These include the restructuring of different services so as to incorporate more business-oriented procedures, as well as an updating of advertising and marketing practices. The SABC's 1987 Annual Report boasts that

[its] "dynamic planning model ... consists of a system of strategic management units and business plans focused on the needs of a public corporation that is a national broadcaster. A comparative study on fifteen critical points showed that the SABC need not stand back for an organisation such as the BBC when it comes to planning for the future

(p. 35).

The content and approach of news and public affairs programmes are perceived to have become less partisan and propagandist than they used to be,<sup>1</sup> and increased broadcasting of educational and instructional programmes has cast a favourable light on the SABC's "public service" role. In October and November of 1989, for instance, when many black schools had experienced massive disruption of classes,

educational material geared towards assisting matric students pass their final exams was hurriedly produced and broadcast over seven hours a day for seven weeks. The following year, a more carefully planned pilot education service began providing schools with regular morning broadcasts covering most subjects. Unfortunately, economic and social realities in South Africa tend to mean that those students who are most in need of supplementary educational assistance are the ones least likely to have access to television.<sup>2</sup> Also, the SABC avoids significant financial outlay by calling on the private sector which, according to chairman Christo Viljoen, "has a social responsibility to foot the bill" (quoted in Finance Week, 'SATV Set for New Service', p. 10). The corporation, nevertheless, is seen by the public to be putting its facilities to potentially valuable use for the benefit of a disadvantaged sector of society.

The SABC's most recently-elected board of directors consists of sixteen members. In contrast with earlier, less representative boards, two of the new members are female, two are black, and one is both female and black.<sup>3</sup> These appointments are not accidental or inexpedient: an analysis of the SABC's 1990 Annual Report reveals that the corporation is as highly conscious of its public image as it is of "colour" differences. According to the Report,

[a]n important decision taken by the SABC is that the staff complement of the Nguni and Sotho radio group and TV2/3 services, including management levels, ought to be more in line with their target audience. This implies that more Black [sic] members of staff who have specific qualities and skills should be developed in a

planned way and placed in management posts. Some of the White [sic] members of staff who occupy these positions at present will be accommodated in other posts in the course of the next few years, after mutual consideration

(p. 8).

Initially, blacks are described as "staff of the Nguni and Sotho radio group and TV2/3", in the next sentence they are "Black" (the capital letter denoting significant "otherness"), and, further down the same page, black viewers and listeners, as "Third World audiences", are even more distanced from the perspective adopted by the SABC.

Clearly, the broadcasting corporation is putting a great deal of effort into transforming what used to be a technically amateurish and politically unprogressive image. In 1988, Viljoen claimed that "[p]eople don't realise that since the board of directors was appointed in April 1987 we have had a new SABC. There is a new era" (quoted in Financial Mail, 'Against the Call', p. 56). When questioned about the SABC's close relationship with the Nationalist government, his response was an attempt to assert the political autonomy of the institution: "the terms of our license", he said, do not include "being the propaganda medium for any ideology" (p. 56).

The process of ideological dissemination -- as Professor Viljoen is no doubt more than well aware -- is a subtle and insidious one, operating in ways which seldom draw attention to themselves, let alone invite deconstruction. As Tony Bennett has pointed out, it is not that

the operations of ideology are necessarily

invisible; but ... that their invisibility is a condition of their effectiveness. They have to be made visible

('Media, "Reality", Signification', p. 298).

Extensive television coverage of the "success" that the South African Defence Force is having in quelling the political "unrest" in the townships could indeed be classified as propaganda, for instance, but a thirteen-part series about a conventional, middle-class "coloured" family experiencing the ups and downs of contemporary urban life in South Africa is far less blatant in getting its particular message across.<sup>4</sup>

Frequently, programmes classified as "educational" are overwhelmingly weighted towards the preservation of established social and political relations.<sup>5</sup> South African research into the ways in which television affects children has tended to concentrate on issues such as how much time is spent watching "the box", how this affects literacy, and how career choices are influenced.<sup>6</sup> To date, little analysis of the ideological import of educational programmes has been undertaken, either of locally-produced or of overseas material. The scope of this thesis precludes the examination of educational television material with the exception of one series with particular significance, Edutaining the English Way. Broadcast on Friday afternoons and repeated on Saturday mornings, this programme was produced in Britain and dramatises stories and plays which revolve around issues considered to be of crucial interest to children, such as sibling rivalry and the importance of working hard at school. As the title of the series suggests, each episode is intended



to educate as it entertains, and in a fashion that relies heavily on the association that the "English way" of doing things is naturally the most superior way.

One section of this series is called Shakespeare in Conversation, whereby four actors take the parts of popular Elizabethan performers Richard Burbage, Edward Alleyn, Richard Tarlton and William Kemp. They are depicted in informal rehearsal situations, working through different scenes from the most well-known plays such as Macbeth, Hamlet and Julius Caesar. A fifth actor takes the part of Shakespeare himself, conveniently on hand to explain the thematic and literary intentions of his plays when one of the actors struggles with the delivery of a speech or is unable to understand how it "ties in" with the rest of the drama. "Bill" is portrayed as a friendly and paternalistic figure with a dry sense of humour, while Burbage et al eagerly hang on his every word. The nature of this representation powerfully supports the dominant idealist approach to literature, whereby the role of author is incontestably authoritative, the literary text is an organically structured and autonomous entity, and the meaning of the work lies in its treatment of human characterisation and its reinforcement of the hierarchical order inherent within the social and natural worlds.

As discussed in Chapter One, this interpretation of Shakespeare -- and literature in general -- duplicates that which is ratified in South African schools. A diligent student paying close attention to Shakespeare in Conversation

will therefore be at an advantage when he or she is required to deal with the plays in the classroom or on the examination paper. Dr Hendrik Aucamp, head of the SABC's instructional television department, says that the SABC perceived that "a definite need" exists for schoolchildren to have extra material on Shakespeare, which is what prompted the purchase of this series from the overseas programme catalogues.<sup>7</sup> He gave no indication that he was aware of the programme's persuasive liberal humanist approach, or even that this bias was detected and then raised for discussion by those appointed to evaluate the suitability of the series for broadcast. It is becoming increasingly apparent that, far from the existence of a sinister conspiracy on the part of those who select material for television broadcast to interpellate viewers as subjects within the existing hegemony, most executive SABC personnel are themselves unable to discern that "liberal" knowledge is not natural but produced -- understanding it, in Skirrow's words, as "the way things are" rather than as ideas constructed by institutions within a particular political, economic and ideological system (p. 29).

As far as educational material is concerned, the SABC's productions of Shakespeare are seen by many to be of such major benefit for students that they would seem to fall primarily within the category of educational programming rather than that of drama. Guy Butler believes that, as educational reinforcement, it is an essential aspect of the

SABC's responsibility as a dominant cultural institution to produce Shakespeare for television, saying that

it's not a question of whether [the SABC] should do it or not, but that they've got to do it. It must be done, even if it's not done exactly as we would like it to be.... Where hundreds of thousands of kids won't be near a theatre,... they will have a chance of seeing this text, those words, being used as it was intended they should be used -- for actors moving in a three-dimensional space. In other words, you're doing some kind of justice to the text

(Personal Interview).

What Butler is ignoring here, however, is the common perception that a film or television adaptation of a literary work is fixed, an apparently straightforward (and unchallengeable) translation from one medium to another. In connection with this, Catherine Belsey has said that

the modern liberal humanist spectator understands, on the basis of experience, the meaning of a text which is seen as the expression of the author's experience. This (single) meaning is guaranteed by the transcendent subjectivity of the author, source and origin of the fiction itself. When the author is Shakespeare, this transcendence is known in advance and ensures the "truth" of the fiction ('Shakespeare and Film', p. 156).

Although a materialist approach to the analysis of textual production (literary and otherwise) is the last thing a die-hard liberal like Butler would ascribe to, he at least recognises that producers and directors have various choices in terms of the kind of interpretation that can be brought to bear on television productions:

I think in a country like England where Shakespeare is part of your daily bread almost, you can take

all kinds of liberties and indulge in all kinds of ironical alterations to the text and so on, but they are assuming in the audience a knowledge of the thing that's being parodied. In a country like this, particularly with the kind of audience we have in mind, who don't know the thing being parodied, you have to present it fairly straight  
(Personal Interview).

This indicates how "straight", meaning "established" and "traditional", is no longer seen simply as a particular conventional mode for television production, but the dominant and therefore "natural" one.

The SABC's "black" television services, TV2/3, optimistically envisaged prior to their inception in 1982 as potential "champions in every respect on the African television scene" (Erasmus, p. 63), cannot in any way be seen to have satisfied the corporation's hopes for their rapid expansion. Although the single-channel TV2/3, originally described as "the biggest undertaking of its kind in the Third World" (Hartman, p. 9), began broadcasting on two channels in 1983, and in spite of the increasingly high quality of its programmes which was proclaimed as "visible evidence of a triumph in manpower development" (Growth, p. 17), the advancement of "black" television has ultimately been hampered by its inability to draw advertising revenue.

In 1990, informal statistics quoted in Finance Week show that, while only eight per cent of South African urban blacks own a car, approximately fifty-three per cent own a television set (Koenderman, p. 27). This would suggest that there exists a sufficiently large black audience to support the short transmission schedules of TV2/3. The reason for

the channel's relatively low audience figures must be sought elsewhere.

Contrary to the assertion that linguistically separate television channels will "advance the self-development of all [South Africa's] peoples and ... foster their pride in their own identity and culture" (Meyer Commission Report, p. 17), and, furthermore, invalidating the claim of one of the inaugurators of TV2 programming whereby the SABC's black television services were portrayed as being "from the people, for the people, by the people" (Erasmus, p. 61, his emphases), evidence suggests that the real reason for the unprofitability of "black" television is that the viewers it is aimed at generally prefer to watch the English- and Afrikaans-medium programmes broadcast on TV1 and TV4.

Much of this material (in particular, sitcoms, soap operas, police and adventure series) is American or British, and is generally of a much better standard than that produced locally. Some overseas programmes are dubbed for broadcast on TV2/3 but, since most urban blacks have either English or Afrikaans (or both) as a second or third language, they are not forced to restrict themselves to these channels. More significantly, however, Socks Kubheka, an executive at TV2/3, suggests that television is "enlightenment" for blacks:

the children of today ... are much more fluent in English and Afrikaans than the people who grew up when there was no television.... Now they can sit down and watch American movies, English movies, whatever, and they pick up a lot of things.... The black population of today is much more sophisticated than it would have been without television. You learn such a lot of things because

it's not formal education but you see things happening, you see how people wear their clothes in those countries, you see how they interact with each other.

The maintenance of the "black" television services over the ten years between 1982 and 1991, against all good business sense,<sup>8</sup> reveals the SABC's covert support of the government's separatist policies behind the apparent liberal awareness and social commitment of the project. Furthermore, as the following comment from the head of TV3 indicates, the advent of television for blacks was understood to have an overtly political function in that it would "bring about a social revolution for the black man [sic] in South Africa. It is going to bring the family, and especially the children, back into their homes" (Hein Kern, quoted in Hartman, p. 9).

Precisely what it was about early South African television that might have had such an enormously depoliticising effect on people was left undisclosed at this stage but, ten years later, the Minister for Home Affairs was able to be more precise when he (inadvertently) reiterated Mr Kern's opinion: "sport keeps an estimated 1,5 million black viewers of soccer on television and roughly five million players and spectators off the streets and away from violence" (Gene Louw, quoted in The Weekly Mail, 'Review', p. 29).

The political chaos that apartheid and its gradual disintegration have generated in South Africa during the past decade -- from the level of the very streets referred to by Mr Louw through to parliament itself -- exposes his statement

for the absurdity that it is. The second point that can be made in connection with the optimistic view that television has the potential to defuse the political situation at the grass roots level is that it stands in direct contrast to the fears of members of the same political party who, prior to 1976, saw only that the "devil's box" would bring about a very different kind of social revolution to the one Mr Kern had in mind.

Although it is partly their lack of commercial viability that has made it so convenient for the "black" television services to be absorbed under the umbrella of CCV-TV, it would be unfair to give the impression that locally-produced programmes in black vernaculars have been so awful that viewers have felt insulted to watch them. Much in the drama, music and variety genres has been confidently approached and technically competent. Tying in with the production of Shakespeare on television is an ambitious project begun during 1990 by an independent local television producer, John Rogers, and aimed specifically at black audiences.

Rogers is an ex-Zimbabwean with considerable acting and directing experience, most of which is in the theatre, although one of his roles was that of Lenox in Douglas Bristow's television production of Macbeth. He has also been involved in the production of two drama series for TV2/3. His proposal to adapt and produce A Midsummer Night's Dream and Macbeth in Xhosa and Zulu respectively has met with approval (although, as yet, been accepted only in principle) by those he approached at TV2/3. Although he is reluctant to

give much information about the financial backing for the productions, he has intimated that the SABC would probably share this responsibility with a large food manufacturing concern. Rogers is adamant that sponsorship will not affect his interpretation or presentation in any way, adding that he doesn't see "that there is anything in Macbeth which the SABC would restrict me from doing anyway" (Personal Interview).

As is to be supposed from this comment, Rogers does not approach Shakespeare's plays with any degree of deviation from Anglo-American critical orthodoxy. Of course, if this were the case, established television production practice in South Africa would make him seem nothing less than a maverick by comparison. What is remarkable, however, is Rogers's assumption that his target audience requires both a localised and a modernised version of the Shakespearean texts before it will be able to "relate" to the drama in any significant way. In his conception of A Midsummer Night's Dream, for example, the fairies are to be portrayed as the spirits of the ancestors and Puck as the tokoloshe.<sup>9</sup> Rogers explains that these changes will be inherently successful because

they [blacks] have that area of supernatural which they will understand. The only problem I'm going to have there is to persuade them that the fairies are actually benign.... The other thing I'm going to have to change of course is the ass's head because of course they didn't have donkeys way back then in this country. So I'm going to make Puck the tokoloshe change it into a warthog, which is a fun image and they laugh at the warthog.

(Personal Interview).



The distinct paternalism evident here -- not to mention the bigoted "us-and-them" attitude -- might lead one to question why Rogers has chosen to produce material specifically for black audiences in the first place. It is of course always a challenge to go where no-one has gone before and, although many of Shakespeare's plays have been translated into black vernaculars (see Chapter Four) and a film version of Macbeth in Xhosa has been produced,<sup>10</sup> these two plays would be the first to be translated and adapted specially for television. Kubheka says that he and his department trust Rogers's ideas and creative instincts because "we've done a lot of work with [him], he's never failed before". Also, for Kubheka, his theatrical background in London and Zimbabwe means that "he's into it, he's into Shakespeare,... he is the guy who understands Shakespeare very well".

Macbeth, or Mtabathe as Rogers's production is to be titled, will embrace a "gutsy" approach in contrast with the way he feels that Shakespeare is usually played in South Africa -- "very prissily". For Rogers, black audiences will enjoy the production

because [they] understand the tribal system, which it was at that stage in Scotland.... They'll understand killing a king in order to get power. Ambition they understand. A tremendous amount of it is directly related to their own history in that regard.

And yet, for all his belief that setting the plays in late seventeenth-century southern Africa will connect in some deep

and immediate way with pre-colonial African history, Rogers does not read Macbeth as a political play:

all Shakespeare for me is entertainment first. I'm not trying to say anything political about it. It's an exciting story of ambition.... I'm not trying to say anything because setting it back there, what can you say politically about it? No, it's entertainment first -- the destruction of a man through greed, and a good man.

Rogers is not alone in assuming that a black audience would not require anything which is culturally and historically removed if it is to be met with understanding or even interest. The undertaking to Africanise Shakespeare leads Ken Leach, for example, to say that

I should imagine that a translation like that would actually find a home far more readily than it would in the pale South African English, because I think that there's understanding there of totalitarianism and the kind of spirit that Macbeth was displaying. They would understand the idea of dictatorship far more readily than we do.

Similarly, Ronnie Wilson thinks that "Macbeth should be wonderful because it's very Zulu-like in its whole conception".<sup>11</sup>

The contradiction between, on the one hand, the perceived need to modernise and localise Shakespearean drama so as to appeal to black audiences and, on the other, the belief that the plays represent historical transcendence and cultural universality, reveals yet another fundamental discrepancy within the conceptual framework of television production in South Africa. Theoretical consistency would surely suggest that the translation and production of the

plays in languages other than their original English is simply a further manifestation of Shakespeare's mass-appeal rather than an obstacle to audience comprehension and appreciation.

Robin Knox-Grant expresses "mixed feelings" about Rogers's undertaking because, for him, "the use of language in the context of the plays is really what it's all about.... The stories, the plots as such, are pretty pathetic". Shakespeare in another language is, then, no longer Shakespeare. The "essence" of Shakespeare is seen to lie, not in the thematic concerns of the plays, but in the particular linguistic way those concerns are articulated. Translation, in other words, is a material transference of the power inherent within the original language of the text to the newly created text with its different language and, consequently, different meaning.

Considering Rogers's preconceived ideas about audience needs and the way in which he means to approach the production of Macbeth and A Midsummer Night's Dream, it is unlikely that either one will present a challenge to the theatrical and naturalistic conventions that have dominated South African television drama production to date. Graham Holderness, suggesting that television as a medium is less open to change or revision than film or theatre, concludes that the "possibilities for an alternative or oppositional reproduction of Shakespeare must be sought elsewhere" ('Boxing the Bard', p. 181). Even though this is related specifically to the BBC, there are enough similarities

between the productions of Shakespeare by the British and South African national broadcasters to warrant applying Holderness's theory to both.

In spite of this, it seems fitting that the concluding chapter of a study of television broadcasting in South Africa should take into account a very different kind of Shakespeare production, one whose adaptation at both the linguistic and the formal levels perhaps functions as an analogy for wider political and cultural transition.

By 1988, when the English television drama department co-produced The Winter's Tale with PACT, the possibility that they would consider producing another Shakespearean play as a one-off, in-studio production was already remote. There was none of the creative zeal of a Bristow or academic authority of a Sargeant to motivate the executive go-ahead for such a project, and recent events indicate that the future for local television drama production as a whole looks extremely bleak.

The SABC's 1990 Annual Report states that its "financial position remains under pressure, and the stated goals relating to local programme content are simply unattainable" (p. 4). In July 1990, Cor Nortjé, programme director of TV1, suggested that more "prestigious" one-off drama productions might be undertaken "when the SABC is more affluent" but, in the wake of recent cut-backs, this seems improbable.

In November 1991, the SABC announced that it would not be awarding any new contracts for drama productions in the immediate future, that it would be responsible for producing all local television drama from now on, and that it would

hire expertise only when necessary. In a "blistering attack on the corporation", Gene Louw, Minister of Home Affairs, said that this could mean the loss of jobs to more than 12,000 highly-trained experts in the field (Cape Times, 'SABC Under Fire', p. 1). In a retaliatory statement, the SABC said that "it stuck by its declared policy that local productions and a healthy local film industry were of paramount importance", but that it could not "take sole responsibility for saving the industry" (Cape Times, 'Local Film Industry Important', p. 3).

The last word, so far, has gone to Christo Viljoen, who has managed to confuse the issue by saying that the SABC in fact would "continue to support local television productions despite the fact that such productions had never been profitable" (Cape Times, 'SABC Still to Back Local TV', p. 5). Louw, accordingly, has since modified his censure of the corporation, and now "appreciates that fact that the SABC [is] obliged in the present harsh economic climate to scale down its expenditure on film productions in 1992" (Cape Times, 'M-Net to Double Money', p. 5).

For John Rogers, consequently, there is now some uncertainty as to whether his productions of Macbeth and A Midsummer Night's Dream will "get off the ground" (Telephonic Interview). Future opportunities, he feels, lie in the feature film industry.

This, however, is not the first sign of trouble for independent television producers in South Africa. A report

in Finance Week during 1984 stated that independent producers were in conflict with the SABC and its practices:

[t]here is general criticism that the SABC,... playing the monopolistic and dictatorial role that it does in the television arena,... has contributed substantially to the shakiness in which many television production companies now find themselves

('Fight for Survival', p. 445).

Many independent producers, apparently, had resorted to bribing SABC officials: during 1983, the corporation's auditors were forced to undertake an investigation into the "widespread allegations" that senior employees "had effectively been taking bribes in return for favouring special scripts or productions, or specific outside production companies" (p. 445).

A corrupt situation like this, or the dilemma that local independent producers currently find themselves in, is a direct result of the SABC's monopoly position as the national broadcaster. It has always maintained that its policy is to support local industry as far as possible, but its dominance has allowed a very unhealthy climate to develop. In 1975 -- even before the SABC introduced its television service -- Raymond Williams found that, [i]n all current [broadcasting] systems, too few people are making the primary decisions about production" (Television: Technology and Cultural Form, p. 148).

Increased competition would alleviate the situation and, although M-Net has in the past come under repeated fire from independents for refusing to stimulate the local industry, it

has gradually been moving towards greater production of local material (Gevisser, p. 20). Significantly, two weeks after the SABC made public its intention to economise on local drama production, M-Net announced that it was going to be doubling its budget allocation for film and drama assignments (Cape Times, 'M-Net to Double Money', p. 5)

It has of course always been more expensive for SABC-TV to undertake the kind of local studio productions of Shakespeare á la Bristow and Leach than to purchase overseas productions, but it can be argued that the more "popular" and "accessible" plays -- Hamlet and Macbeth, for instance -- have now been done and preserved on video for lucky future generations. Overseas productions of plays not selected for local television adaptation are available, most recent screenings being Peter Brook's 1969 production of King Lear in February 1990, and Zeffirelli's 1966 The Taming of the Shrew in September 1991. The possibility that the SABC will have access to some of the BBC-Timelife Shakespeare productions is anticipated, and regularly fuelled by reports that Equity may soon rescind its ban on the sale of material to South Africa.<sup>12</sup> These recent developments work to confirm one of Raymond Kuhn's predictions about worldwide trends in broadcasting practices, whereby he sees that increased production costs for genres such as drama will put greater emphasis on imported material (p. 15).

When Roy Sargeant disparagingly commented in September 1990 that the new management of English television drama "now have no interest in that kind of thing [local production of

Shakespeare]", he failed to take into account the economic restrictions imposed on it by the institution of which it forms a part. Clearly, money has been put into a number of locally-made drama series in recent years but, cost-per-minute, these are likewise cheaper to produce than one-off productions of drama.

Future opportunities to earn the prestige that comes from the production of Shakespeare seem non-existent: South African viewers may be offered overseas productions or an occasional arts council co-production, but economic factors suggest that the SABC will never undertake another in-house television production of Shakespeare again. It is also unlikely that any future government in South Africa would make this a priority, although an exception may perhaps be made for more modest, workshop-type forms of production, particularly if they are linked to an educational project which proposes to re-evaluate traditional approaches and attitudes towards dominant texts.

While a Nationalist government remains in power, the broadcasting industry in South Africa is going to be shaped to a great extent by the recommendations of the task group constituted by the Minister of Home Affairs in 1990 and headed by the chairman of the SABC, Christo Viljoen.<sup>13</sup> The revision of the image of national television as demonstrated by the implementation of CCV-TV is as yet a largely cosmetic one,<sup>14</sup> and, as such, corresponds with the underlying thrust of the task group's Report, released in August 1991. Its investigations -- the objectivity of which is rendered



questionable by the group's membership, which was preponderantly representative of state interests -- are clearly predisposed towards the maintenance of the SABC's institutional hegemony.<sup>15</sup>

Initially, the group's recommendations appear to be progressive, including as they do a restructuring of the broadcasting industry so as to allow it to be "free from political control and influence" (p. x), and the establishment of an Independent Broadcasting Authority to ensure that this is indeed the case. Later provisos, however, ultimately nullify the possibility of radical change: the recommendation that new legislation over broadcasting be passed stipulates only that "[d]irect political control" be removed (p. 71, my emphasis). Furthermore, it is recommended that the members of the future Independent Broadcasting Authority should be appointed by the State President. It is the Task Group's recommendation for a new Broadcasting Act, however, which reveals its lack of impartiality towards and interest in continued government regulation:

A new Broadcasting Act for South Africa should contain specific stipulations on the local content of broadcasts, cross-ownership, classes of broadcasting licences to be issued, restrictions on the tenure of licences, the general principles of a code for programmes, general provision for advertisements, monitoring of programmes, etc. so as not to leave any discretion to the licensing authorities or broadcasters

(Viljoen Report, p. 72, my emphasis).

As far as drama on national television is concerned, the Viljoen Report reiterates the claim made in the SABC's 1989 Annual Report, whereby the success of certain Afrikaans drama series in particular has "proved yet again that good local programmes draw larger audiences than some of the top programmes from abroad" (p. 13-14). Further on in the Report, however, it is recommended that the future Independent Broadcasting Authority enforce the inclusion of a minimum percentage of locally-produced material on private television and radio services (p. 27). Protection of the local television production industry is less the motivation for such a recommendation than the SABC's desire to limit competition as much as possible. Secondary concerns may relate to the possibility that overseas programmes will be more readily available to independent, fledgling South African broadcasters who have no previous links with the apartheid government, and whose interest may also force purchasing costs higher.

Under a different government, however, the authority and influence of the Viljoen Commission's recommendations may have to surrender to a restructuring of broadcasting policy and practice. In the meantime, during the current political period of transition, the African National Congress has called for the provisional control of the SABC under an Interim Independent Communications Authority. Christo Viljoen is on record as saying, quite remarkably, that this would bring the corporation "perilously close" to being

state-controlled (quoted in Cape Times, 'SABC Board "Needs to be Replaced"', p. 7).

Meanwhile, at a media conference held in February 1992, a spokesman for the SABC, Johan Pretorius, editor-in-chief of news productions, said that the corporation is now ready to accept new proposals on the future of broadcasting made by the Constitution for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa): he admitted that the SABC has a "credibility problem", and that it would be naïve to deny that it had followed a "fairly strict government-of-the-day line" (quoted in Wentzel, p. 7). Given the SABC's history of ideological inflexibility, its recently declared support for "generally accepted democratic values" and willingness to reflect these in its programmes (p. 7) is something of a breakthrough, even if these developments will -- ultimately -- work in favour of the corporation's own interests.

Shakespeare's star may no longer be rising in South African television, but his future in South African theatre and education doesn't seem to be under any threat. Of Shakespeare in performance, Temple Hauptfleisch suggests that we should (and can) have the best of all possible worlds:

If Shakespeare is to prosper in South Africa, he will have to do so in forms and languages beyond the stock heritage of the British colonial tradition as well. This implies that, while we certainly need more and better formal, conventional productions in English, though perhaps a few with a stronger South African flavour than we have seen of late, the Shakespearean venture should also be able to produce quality translations in other local languages (Afrikaans, Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa, all of them

(p. 92).

In the field of education, Shakespeare has traditionally occupied a central position on school and university syllabuses. Historically, critical practice in South Africa has been biased in favour of traditional Anglo-American approaches to Shakespeare's work, coinciding in its effects with, to use Martin Orkin's words, "that bias deliberately aimed at by the educative philosophy propounded by the dominant classes" (Shakespeare Against Apartheid, p. 17). Although never so crudely or explicitly acknowledged, the plays are seen to have political tenor only in so far as they support the "natural" social structures of domination and subordination. Emphasis is laid on the poetry of the language and the behaviour of the heroic protagonist to the extent that Guy Butler, on behalf of the English Academy of Southern Africa, can say that

when we read War and Peace the political or military causes are secondary; when we read Hamlet, the rotten state of Denmark is secondary; we remember the sudden effulgence of character, the purgation of a soul, the indestructible humanity of a rogue

('The Purpose of the Conference', p. 17).

Furthermore, the Shakespearean canon itself has always been symbolically invoked to bolster the smug presence of an English intellectual elite who undertake the perpetuation of cultural colonisation:

Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens, Conrad, James, Yeats, Eliot -- the great central tradition, profoundly humane, infinitely rich and varied -- surely this is what is important, to perpetuate

this is our task: the heritage of all who possess  
English as a birthright, the prize of all who  
master it

(Butler, p. 13).<sup>16</sup>

Butler has asserted that the future of Renaissance studies in the "new South Africa" seems "to be as good as any periodised literary studies [sic], perhaps better" (Personal Letter, 17 September 1991) -- although it appears that it is going to need a little boost from academic and commercial quarters.

"The great challenge in southern Africa", Butler has said, "is to make [Shakespeare] accessible to those for whom English is not a mother tongue" ('Editorial', 1989, p. vi).<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa and the Institute for the Study of English have embarked -- with the financial assistance of the Anglo American Corporation -- on a joint "nuts and bolts project", which includes producing new editions of some of the plays, a teacher's manual and audio-visual material (Wright, 'Shakespeare for Students in Southern Africa', p. 65).<sup>17</sup>

Some recent trends in South African critical practice -- some more genuinely radical and interventionist than others -- suggest the possibility of Shakespeare's liberation from the restrictions of liberal humanist ideals. Orkin in Shakespeare Against Apartheid attempts to "wrest the Shakespeare text from the conservative grasp of traditionalist critics" (p. 184), and has endeavoured to show how the very texts used to uphold dominant ideology in South

Africa can fruitfully be re-read in support of oppositional political and social restructuring.

The forces aligned against Orkin can be seen in the work of, among others, Brian Cheadle and Victor Houlston.<sup>18</sup> While Cheadle argues for the critical recognition of the strengths of "the New Historicism", with its "powerful and subtle explorations of just how intricate the social and political dimension of works of art are" (p. 31), he nevertheless reveals at the same time the deep-seated tendency of traditionalist critics to adhere to the notion that some texts ("works of art") are to be privileged over others.

Houlston is less indulgent than Cheadle towards what he terms "the new historicist enterprise" with its "aggrieved and materialist mentality", because its preoccupation with the operations of power makes it likely that

such an emphasis will re-introduce "contemporary relevance" prematurely, by projecting current left-wing fixations onto the past, so that the formulae of, say, conflicts between dominant and emergent "discourses" are applied gratuitously to the text.

In delineating paradigms of subversion, the more urgently the critic seeks an equivalent to a present-day conflict, the more likely historical distortion is to occur

(p. 69).

Only a radical reassessment of the concept of those texts classified as "literature" will allow for the demystification of the ideological operations behind this particular type of cultural practice. It is precisely the prospect of theoretical redefinition -- "the recognition of

'literature' as a specialising social and historical category" (Williams, Marxism and Literature, p. 53) -- which, it is feared, will not only undermine Shakespeare's position of cultural power, but will also herald a re-evaluation of the dominant position that the English language and culture in general has assumed in post-colonial South Africa to date.

Aside from the perceived necessity for new and locally-specific versions of Shakespeare's texts, Butler also believes that Shakespeare's survival in a post-apartheid restructuring of the country's education system will be heavily reliant on the support it receives from theatre, film and television production:

the prime concern ... is not that you've got to pull Shakespeare out of literature syllabuses..., but that you should look at the text of Shakespeare after you've had an exposure to the drama of the whole thing

(Personal Interview).

In this, Butler has concentrated on dealing with what he understands some of the problems to be when readers with English as a second or third language are required to study Shakespeare, rather than the issue of whether or not Shakespeare is going to continue to be prescribed study material at all. As this issue has also not been addressed by Orkin in Shakespeare Against Apartheid, what is intuitively suggested, perhaps, is that Shakespeare is too firmly entrenched to be erased. Critical approaches may vary, however, and Orkin concludes by expressing the hope that alternative critical practices "may pave the way for a

new educational dispensation ... that will include one day, amongst many other important things, the emergence, perhaps, of a people's Shakespeare" (p. 184).

In his next book, Drama and the South African State, Orkin considers that young children required to learn English as a second or third language may actually be inhibited from mastering it properly if they are expected to deal with the complexities of Shakespeare too early in their school career. He suggests that concerns about the possible abandonment of Renaissance literature in post-apartheid South African schools might be lessened by considering the examples of other post-independent African countries, which indicate "that the Shakespeare text will still have a place in the syllabus, but the timing of its appearance, and the way it is used, must surely change" (p. 238).

Ultimately, the reasons why a new political dispensation based on social democratic principles in South Africa is likely to retain Shakespeare in its education system may be precisely those which have accounted for the endurance of the "Shakespeare myth" in the "old" South Africa. Shakespeare may traditionally signify imperialism, British superiority and the hegemony of the dominant cultural order but, signifying that self-same supreme power, his appropriation by a new ruling class would symbolise the legitimization of its position.

Portrayed in a newspaper article as "Shakespeare's Soldier -- Taking up Arms Against a Troubled World", it is perhaps not entirely whimsy which leads Chris Hani, leader of



the South African Communist Party and chief of staff of the ANC's Umkhonto we Sizwe, to describe himself as "a lover of Shakespeare" (Bulbring, p. 4). The implication is a positive one for those who enjoy -- or make a career of -- performing, reading, watching, producing or teaching Shakespeare. While revolutionary tactics suggest that the exchange of proprietary rights is in order, the power of the myth will remain intact.

## Appendix

This list of both local and overseas Shakespeare productions broadcast on SABC-TV between 1976 and 1991 has been compiled from SABC records and newspaper archives.

Details of the overseas productions are not frequently given in newspaper programme guides, and there are also a few discrepancies between the SABC's (handwritten!) records and information obtained from personnel.

I have, therefore, had to rely to quite a large extent on 'A Selective Filmography', compiled by Holderness and McCullough. (An asterisk indicates guesswork).

Saturday 24 April	1976	<u>Hamlet</u> * FDR, 1960, film, b/w
Thursday 6 October	1977	<u>Much Ado About Nothing</u> SABC, 1977
Thursday 22 October	1978	<u>Othello</u> * GB, 1965, film, col.
Thursday 25 September	1980	<u>Macbeth</u> SABC, 1980
Thursday 8 October	1981	<u>Romeo and Juliet</u> * Italy/GB, 1968, film, col.
Thursday 22 October	1981	<u>Twelfth Night</u> SABC, 1981
Monday 14 June	1982	<u>Romeo and Juliet</u> SABC/PACOFs, 1981
Thursday 28 October	1982	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> SABC, 1982
Sunday 13 November	1983	<u>Hamlet</u> SABC, 1983
Thursday 14 February	1985	<u>The Taming of the Shrew</u> * GB, 1952, TV, b/w
Sunday 20 July	1986	<u>The Tempest</u> USA, 1960, film, col.
Sunday 12 October	1986	<u>Julius Caesar</u> USA, 1953, film, b/w
Sunday 12 April	1987	<u>The Merchant of Venice</u> SABC, 1987

Sunday	28 August	1988	<u>The Winter's Tale</u> SABC/PACT, 1988
Sunday	11 February	1990	<u>King Lear</u> GB/Denmark, 1969, film, b/w
Tuesday	5 November	1991	<u>The Taming of the Shrew</u> Italy/USA, 1966, film, col.

## Notes

### Introduction (pp. 1-33)

1 SABC records are far from clear about which particular production this was and when it was broadcast, but it is likely to have been a German film production of Hamlet, made in 1960, directed by Franz Peter Wirth.

It is possible that this was the first Shakespearean production to be broadcast on SABC-TV, but I feel that there is too much uncertainty surrounding this to warrant an analysis as to its significance.

2 The political reforms occurring in South Africa are reflected to a certain extent in its educational institutions. At primary and secondary levels, "white" education is controlled by the Department of Education and Culture, and education for blacks by the Department of Education and Training. Regulations do exist which preclude, for instance, a black scholar attending a "white" school, although many schools, technikons and universities do not abide by the regulations.

The South African Institute of Race Relations reports that "coloured" and Indian education authorities admit pupils of other race groups under certain conditions, while tertiary institutions are free to admit students irrespective of racial classification. The 1989/90 Race Relations Survey of the South African Institute of Race Relations also notes that various parliamentary acts passed during 1989 "consolidated the provision and administration of white education as an own affair" (Cooper, p. lxv).

3 The Broadcasting Act, no.22 of 1936, which was to "provide for the control of broadcasting within the Union, to establish the South African Broadcasting Corporation, to define its functions, powers and duties, to amend further the Radio Act, 1926, and to provide for other incidental matters".

4 For a more detailed discussion of Dr Hertzog's strategy of opposition, see Orlik (1970).

5 Although it is unlikely that any official findings would have made reference to this, Philpott (p. 4), Corrigan (p. 19) and Harrison and Ekman (p. 104) all allude to the 1969 Apollo II moon-landing as a possible catalyst for increased pressure from angry South Africans who had been excluded from witnessing the event on television, unlike most of the rest of the world.

6 The Afrikaner Broederbond (Brotherhood), established in 1918, is an underground organisation with 12,000 members, whose aim is to secure and maintain Afrikaner domination in South Africa.

In a circular to its members in 1934, the then chairman, Professor J.C. van Rooy, said that the "primary consideration is whether Afrikanerdom will reach its ultimate destiny of domination in South Africa. Brothers, the key to South Africa's problems is not whether one party or another shall obtain the whiphand, but whether the Afrikaner Broederbond shall govern South Africa", (quoted in Wilkins and Strydom, p. 2).

According to Wilkins and Strydom, the Broederbond has managed to influence political, social and economic practices to the extent that the "South African Government today is the Broederbond and the Broederbond is the Government" (p. 1).

Writing in 1978, the authors found that there were forty-nine Broederbonders involved in broadcasting in South Africa and that, as far as the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Matters Relating to Television is concerned, Dr Meyer informed the Broederbond on his findings before passing them on to the Government and Parliament (p. 12).

7 The SABC's lack of policy change over the years seems even more disquieting in the light of a 1966 report by Thompson, whereby the "present chairman is Dr P.J. Meyer, who was formerly an officer in the Ossewa Brandwag and secretary of the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuur verenigings, and is reported to be present head of the Broederbond. J.J. Kruger, a former editor of Transvaler, is cultural adviser, and Douglas Fuchs is director of programmes. Under their direction the news reports and commentaries are now strongly impregnated with Nationalist propaganda" (quoted in Corrigan, p. 25).

The Ossewa Brandwag ("Ox-Wagon Guard") was a pro-Nazi sabotage organisation; the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuur ("Federation of Afrikaner Culture") promotes the concept of "separate development"; and the Afrikaans Transvaler newspaper is extremely right-wing.

8 To appease newspaper and film corporations, the government did not allow SABC-TV to accept any advertisements until 1978, two years after it began operating.

9 See C.M. Rogerson for an analysis of television manufacture in South Africa during the 1970s, and how it was linked to the State's desire to maintain and rationalise the prevailing socio-economic order and class relations.

10 It should be noted that these figures are estimates, and themselves based on estimates for the previous year as quoted in Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa (p. 31). All population figures at this time were supplied by the government's Department of Statistics.

11 In many cases, very different viewing conditions would have prevailed. Not all black television viewers would have been watching from within a family environment. A television set would have been a big attraction used to draw

clientele to township shebeens, where people would have watched in relatively large groups.

This mode of viewing perhaps anticipates more recent ideas about how "'watching television' has come to be seen less as an isolated and individual, more and more as a social, even a collective, activity" (Hall, Introduction in Morley, p. 8).

12 Riaan Eksteen, then director-general of the SABC, also attempts to portray South Africa's embarrassingly late start as a virtue:

South Africa was a late entrant in the world of television, so we were able to benefit from the experience of other countries, and hence install a national television service of exceptional technical quality. Likewise, when the SABC undertook to produce and broadcast non-formal educational television programmes, extensive efforts were made to learn from the experience of leading educational television centres

('Foreword', in Baggaley, Duby and Lewy, p. iv).

13 There is a small but noteworthy body of locally-published material which either directly addresses or quietly criticises SABC-TV's partisan position along with van Zyl; see, for example, Financial Mail ('WKRP in Johannesburg'), Tomaselli and Tomaselli ('Change and Continuity at the SABC'), Forbes, Financial Mail ('Who's the Boss?') and Tomaselli, Tomaselli and Muller.

14 A review by Margaret Daymond supports this, pointing out that the selection of plays for production by the English television drama department seems to have been restricted to "the golden oldies" because "they're much safer than anything local and current would be, for local work might reveal something uncomfortably true about our country" (p. 47).

15 Tomaselli and Tomaselli suggest, in fact, that this was the main function of the Steyn Commission -- to set the right climate to enable the passing of the Internal Security Act (No. 74 of 1982), the Protection of Information Act (No. 84 of 1982), and the Registration of Newspapers Amendment Act (No. 98 of 1982) ('How to Set Your House in Order', p. 20).

16 SABC-TV actually experienced pressure from competition two years prior to this. In 1984, viewers in the Johannesburg/Pretoria/Soweto area found they were able to pick up Bophutatswana Television (Bop-TV) with the help of special frequency-converters.

Audience figures do not appear to be very high but, according to Marketing Mix, Bop-TV became very popular very quickly ('SATV Figures Shaken ... by Bop?'). Apparently, the SABC felt sufficiently threatened to have (allegedly) limited the reception area to reduce "spillage" ('Bop TV: A Medium with a Massive Potential', p. 53).

17 90,9% of M-Net Holdings is jointly owned by The Argus Newspaper Group, Nasionale Pers, Perskor, Times Media, Dispatch Media and the Natal Witness. 9,1% is held by a trust on behalf of M-Net's employees.

18 During 1991, the government finally gave M-Net licence to broadcast news. Gevisser notes that M-Net experienced a flood of new subscriptions from people in anticipation of this development (p. 19).

19 Population figures, which include the ten homelands, are according to statistics of the Bureau for Market Research at the University of South Africa, quoted in Cooper et al (p. lv).

20 The names of the members of the SABC Board are listed in the SABC publication, This is the SABC. Names of members were checked against the Broederbond Membership List supplied in Wilkins and Strydom (Appendix, pp. 1-299).

21 My understanding of the theory behind this type of media analysis has also been largely informed by the work of Nicholas Garnham.

22 A few such examples would include Anthony Davies, 'Shakespeare and the Media of Film, Radio and Television'; Alice Venesky Griffin, 'Shakespeare Through the Camera's Eye'; Bernice Kliman, 'The BBC Hamlet'; Mary Maher, 'Hamlet's BBC Soliloquies'; Michael Manheim, 'The Shakespeare Plays on Television'; Michael Mullin, 'Macbeth on Film'; Marvin Rosenberg, 'Shakespeare on Television: An Optimistic Survey'; and Stanley Wells, 'The Canon in the Can'.

## Chapter One (pp. 34-58)

1 See Tomaselli, Tomaselli, and Muller for a discussion about SABC-TV's lack of adequate coverage of the Riots in the interests of "sober, factual, authoritative and timeous" reporting (p. 101 and pp. 110-11).

2 Quince, writing on theatrical productions of Shakespeare in South Africa, states unequivocally that "English-speaking white South Africans tend to look down upon Afrikaners, Coloureds, Indians and blacks as culturally inferior, and a solid performance of a Shakespeare play, looking almost as if it could have appeared on the London stage, does wonders for maintaining and enhancing their view of themselves as culturally superior" (p. 29).

3 See, for example, Eichbaum, who finds that SABC-TV's "cultural content [is] spasmodic and seemingly without policy or direction"; the least that viewers should be able to expect, he says, is a "consistent policy of arts promotion" ('SABC-TV: What is Your Policy?', p. 46))

4 Articles by other South African researchers are far less critical of the role television plays. See, for instance, Senekal, Nel, and van Vuuren, de Beer and du Toit.

5 Cf. Pieter de Bruyn, deputy director-general of the SABC in 1982, who claimed the existence of a healthy relationship between the corporation and overseas broadcasters:

you know television people and the production companies, they are professional people. All they are interested in is the programmes -- they are not interested in politics, especially America. There they are commercially orientated. If the price is right, you get whatever you want

(p. 39).

6 As depressing as it may be to concede this point, Knox-Grant may well be right. Hoskins and Mirus suggest that "the format and type of drama originated by the American entertainment industry have in the most recent era created a new universal art form which is claiming something close to a worldwide audience" (p. 504).

Also, because "the cinema exposure of Hollywood movies has familiarised world audiences over the years with US fictional entertainment values, the taste for current American productions has actually increased as an indirect result" (p. 506).

7 The Artes awards are the South African version of the USA's Tony awards.

8 Gé Korsten is a very popular Afrikaans singer, famous for his ballads and love-songs.

9 An article in the Financial Mail of 21 August 1987 notes that the replacement of fixed advertising rates with demand-driven rates indicates the SABC's willingness to adapt to the principles of the free market ('Brave New World', p. 75). Unfortunately, time has shown that the prediction that this trend would brake the rate of increase in television licence fees has not been realised.

10 Three examples of drama productions in English which have been repeated are 1922 (1984 and 1991), The Settlers (1980 and 1982), and The Mantis Project (1986 and 1991).

## Chapter Two (pp. 59-93)

1 The same applies to Ken Leach, even though the credits of all the productions list both Bristow and Leach as "directors". (In Macbeth, Bristow is also credited as "editor").

2 Although Waller does not suggest the idea of misrepresentation, he also distinguishes between television



productions of Shakespeare and other kinds of drama production (p. 21).

3 This is a common perspective! Herbert Kretzmet, reviewing Trevor Nunn's production of Macbeth in 1979 for ITV, writes that "Macbeth might have been written for television. The world it describes is confined and suffocating. Most of its action takes place at night, and seldom outdoors. Its true landscape is the human mind obsessed by violent death. It is a play of close-up and shadow" (in London Daily Mail, 5 January 1979, quoted in Bulman and Coursen, p. 249).

4 Not all critics agree with Hearst. Coursen, for instance, considers that "the substance of Shakespeare's plays is their language", and so, because television "can incorporate more language than film", it follows that "when the Bard meets the Tube ... the transition should be much easier than it is when Shakespeare is translated to film" (p. 7).

The success or failure of producing Shakespeare for television would, surely, rely on aspects other than the amount of lines one can reasonably squash in.

5 Television is an essentially realistic medium in the sense that it is able to convey a "socially convincing sense of the real" (Fiske, p. 21).

Realism is, of course, a convention, and one of the most powerful ways in which it operates in television drama is through camera-use which effaces narrative or directorial intervention.

6 Bristow also revealed this by preparing notes in advance of our interview in May 1990 on Macbeth only. By comparison, Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night came in for very little discussion.

7 As far as the SABC and radio broadcasting are concerned, Lanham quotes the remarks of John Simpson, the BBC's South African correspondent: "Listening to the radio is like switching on the BBC Home Services in the days before Suez.... The accents of the English services are impeccably upper middle-class. It's only when people are interviewed that you hear authentic South African being spoken -- the accent, after all, of the majority of whites here" (quoted in The Standard in South African English, pp. 19-20).

Lanham suggests that the SABC "is actually hard-put to maintain its British accents, but does so under pressure from, possibly, a minority, yet nevertheless an influential sector of the SAE speech community" (p. 20).

8 Proclamation R228 of 5 October 1973 replaced Proclamation R26 of 1965, which was originally passed under the Group Areas Act of 1957. Except under "the authority of a permit", this act prohibited "any person who is at any time present in or upon any land or premises in the controlled

area or in a group area, as the case may be, and to any person who allows such person to be so present for the purpose of attending any place of public entertainment or partaking of any refreshments ordinarily involving the use of seating accommodation".

9 Pro Musica Antigua was a group of Johannesburg musicians led by Alan Weinberg, at that time a lecturer with the Johannesburg School of Art, Music and Ballet. It was Weinberg's suggestion to use this song, and he also composed and arranged special music for Bristow's production of Twelfth Night.

10 See Ellis (p. 134) for a discussion about different strategies of address used on television; direct address, particularly in connection with programme presenters, newsreaders, politicians, etc., can signify both authority and immediacy.

11 In considering how this issue is generally perceived, Shepherd finds that "[h]omosexuality in the plays has only been found in the last few years, and doesn't cause much worry. The Sonnets are different because, instead of showing a fictional world, they apparently depict Shakspeare's [sic] real feelings" (p. 96). It should be noted that Shepherd is writing in England -- present South African society could still not be described as tolerant enough not to worry about homosexuality.

12 In spite of this, a review of the production in the next day's Argus found that "[t]he Bard takes to South African television like a natural" (van der Heever, p. 3). The review consisted mainly of a summary of the plot and briefly mentioned that the set and photography were "very well done".

13 The selection of these particular commentaries on Shakespeare and its production suggest that Bristow identified his own practice with the orthodoxy (and security) of the Romantic approach.

14 Whether consciously or not, Bristow's representation of the witches here corresponds exactly with that in George Schaefer's 1960 production of Macbeth, where Macbeth's final encounter with the three witches takes the form of a dream: their three heads are also imaged facing the camera, in a revolving sequence (Manvell, (p. 48 (black and white plate), and p. 115).

15 Sinfield shows how recent approaches to and representations of witches (in, for instance, literary criticism and theatre productions) "illustrate the extent to which critical orthodoxy is not the mere response to the text which it claims to be: it is remaking it within currently acceptable parameters" ('Macbeth: History, Ideology and Intellectuals', p. 72).

### Chapter Three (pp. 94-120)

1 An article in The Argus of 11 June 1982 reports that SABC-TV was to raise its budget for locally-produced programmes by fifty per cent -- "but money alone will not necessarily ensure better quality programmes, a spokesman said. "Our problem is a lack of suitably trained people, who are attracted to private companies that pay higher salaries", he said. He said that SABC-TV budgets for home grown ventures such as documentaries had been unfavourably compared with those of overseas services.... Nonetheless an appreciable upgrading in the quality of local programmes is expected with the new injection of capital" (Waite, p. 1).

2 As Shakespeare's longest play, Hamlet probably lends itself to greater abridgement than the others. Commenting on Olivier's cutting of half the text of Hamlet for his 1948 film, Hapgood says that "Shakespeare's style has a Renaissance copiousness and explicitness that can make it seem long-winded in forms where much is often left unspoken" (p. 277).

3 Leach demonstrates here how, in Elliott's words, the "demands of commerce ... have come to invoke most types of control over the creative process. These range from true commercialism -- turning culture into a marketable commodity -- to the controls involved in organising production for administrative convenience, political expediency or the whims of the ultimate audience" (p. 147).

4 Quince notes that, in 1981, Robert Mohr directed a stage production of A Midsummer Night's Dream at the State Theatre in Pretoria where the part of Bottom was taken by Toby Cronjé, another Afrikaans actor who chose to play up his natural accent (p. 159). As will be seen in Chapter Four, Cronjé does this for even greater effect in the SABC/PACT production of The Winter's Tale.

5 Even so, black characters (Othello being the best example) have traditionally been played by white actors, overseas as well as in South Africa. The casting of Bill Curry as Morocco in this production of The Merchant of Venice suggests the admission of some sort of South African reality previously excluded from Shakespeare.

6 Sometimes, as Hachten says, even a minor controversy can reveal something significant about SABC policy.

He tells this story: in 1978, it was suggested to SABC-TV that a rabbi rather than a Christian minister be invited occasionally to give the epilogue which ends programming each evening on television. Retief Uys, an SABC spokesman, said, "South Africa being a Christian nation, only members of Christian denominations are invited to take part in regular religious programmes"; Koot Vorster, brother of the then-

State President B.J. Vorster and moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church to which many Afrikaners belong, qualified this, saying it was "completely correct" that South Africa was a Christian nation, and that it would not be "right" to have "Jewish people who had gone against Christ" give the epilogue" (quoted in Hachten, p. 68).

Some prejudices, it seems, will never die; perhaps anti-semitism is still more prevalent than many of us would like to think.

#### Chapter Four (pp. 121-147)

1 These are the only two televised stage productions of Shakespeare, although other drama productions have been televised by SABC-TV. These include The Martian Chronicles (PACT/SABC, 1988) and Le Tartuffe (CAPAB/SABC, 1988); musicals include Celebrations (PACT/SABC, 1986) and Goudstad, Goue Stad (PACT/SABC, 1986); various operas and classical music concerts have also been televised, and ballet productions include CAPAB's Romeo and Juliet in 1980.

2 Manvell points out that there is a history in Britain of theatre productions being filmed for television, apart from Shakespearean drama.

The first screen record of a Shakespearean stage production is an experimental "electronivision" presentation in 1964 of John Gielgud's production of Hamlet on Broadway, starring Richard Burton. The final film was made up from recordings obtained during three separate performances, but the image had poor definition and the sound was frequently indistinct. Apparently, Richard Burton ordered that the film be destroyed only two days after it was first screened (Manvell, p. 132).

3 A bibliography of translations appears in Shakespeare in Southern Africa, Vol.2, 1988, 124-130

4 Romeo and Juliet seems to have been a popular choice: according to Maureen Viljoen, Kotzé's 1981 production was the third staged in Bloemfontein in four years.

5 The Afrikaans Drama department at SABC-TV has a copy of Romeo en Juliet but this is only on 35mm film. Although the Programme Sales department at the SABC does supply copies of programmes on request and can also arrange to have 35mm film transferred to 16mm, it was particularly difficult to obtain a copy of this production because the Afrikaans Drama department had moved to new offices and the administrative secretary had no idea where their film was.

Surprisingly, perhaps, neither Sandra Kotzé nor Dirk de Villiers had kept a copy of Romeo en Juliet, and an appeal to the Drama Manager at PACOFS was also fruitless. The parents of the actress who played Juliet, Rina Nienaber, had apparently kept a private copy but, by the time she spoke to them on my behalf, it had been lost.

My last resort was to write to various newspapers, hoping that, if my letter was published, someone, somewhere, with a recording of the production might read the letter.

In December 1991, I had a phone call from Chris Fourie, a lecturer in the Drama department at the University of the Orange Free State, who had read my letter in Die Volksblad, an Afrikaans newspaper based in Bloemfontein. His colleague, Anton Welman, who had had a small role in the production, had made a recording of it, and was kind enough to record a copy of this for me.

6 The subsequent discovery that Brink had been commissioned by the SABC to write a thirteen-part drama series called The Settlers (about the arrival of British settlers in South Africa in 1820) suggests that neither he nor the SABC had in fact distanced themselves too much from each other. Received in November 1979, The Settlers was broadcast on TV1 during 1980 and repeated in 1982 -- the same year as the broadcast of Romeo en Juliet.

7 Hapgood, giving examples of televised live theatrical performances, comments that, "when the camera-work is well-rehearsed and a zoom lens used to advantage, this approach can be effective, particularly when the performance itself is presentational in style", although, ultimately, a production like this remains "simply the record of a stage performance" (p. 276).

8 This production of The Winter's Tale has a curious parallel with a 1966 production staged at the Edinburgh Festival, and filmed for television.

Manvell says, of the final product, that it "did little to inspire confidence in this utility form of film-making, which could only be justified if it resulted in a clear and true record of a really distinguished stage production. This version of The Winter's Tale suffered badly from over-emphasis both in the acting and in the continuous, non-selective use of close-up -- this obviously done in order to anticipate the needs of television" (p. 116-117).

9 Unlike Richard II, this Maynardville production was broadcast by the SABC -- not on television, but on radio!

#### Conclusion (pp. 148-177)

1 Peter Soal, for instance, media affairs spokesperson for the Democratic Party, found, in March 1990, that the political stance of the SABC "has become more neutral recently" (quoted in Cranston, p. 81).

2 In 1990, SABC chairman Christo Viljoen acknowledged the shocking fact that only eighteen per cent of primary and secondary schools in South Africa have access to electricity, let alone television sets (quoted in Financial Mail, 'Testing Times', p. 79).

3 The SABC's executive committee, however, (which is more directly concerned with operations than the board) has six members, all of whom are white males.

4 Die Allemans ("The Everymans") is a locally-produced "educational" programme series which tacitly endorses liberal values.

5 Research into educational television material was undertaken during 1985/6 by Stupart, at the request of the head of Educational Programmes RTV1 at the SABC. The SABC had recently formed two main educational divisions, Educational Programmes RTV1 and Educational Programmes RTV2/3. Stupart finds it "worthy of note that the SABC has divided its education broadcasts into divisions using the race of the audience as the sole criterion. This is consistent with the overall policy regarding education in South Africa, namely that education for the separate racial groups should remain separate" (p. 7).

6 See, for example, Nel, Alpha, Neon, van Vuuren, de Beer and du Toit, and Senekal. No attempt is made to consider any educational programme within its institutional or wider socio-political context and, with the exception of the article in Neon, research is conducted among English- and Afrikaans-speaking children only.

Kotze provides an example of research which takes ideological factors into account when questioning the effects of the mass media on schoolchildren, but television is not a separate focus of analysis and specific educational programmes are not considered. One of the conclusions drawn is that it "seems as if the potential political socialisation role of [television] may surpass that of the newspapers and radio. As a result of government control of radio and television, this medium can possibly exercise a pro-government influence" (pp. 30-31).

7 The SABC differentiates between educational television and instructional television, the former dealing with more formal, syllabus-based material, and the latter with general topics.

8 See, for example, Greenblo, ('Privatise the SABC'), who suggests that the unprofitable services of TV2/3 should be directly subsidised by the government instead of indirectly by the tax-payer (p. 6).

9 Branford, in A Dictionary of South African English, gives the following definitions:

tokoloshe: "an evil spirit widely believed in by both urban and rural Africans: it is invoked in witchcraft and offered as an extenuating circumstances in criminal cases. There are various beliefs concerning it: to look it in the face is death; it lives near water; it is fond of children; it is sexually insatiable; it can make itself invisible or

take various forms though its usual form is that of a hairy dwarfish man" (Branford, p. 256);

ancestral spirits -- or amadhlozi (Zulu), amatongo (Nguni), imishologu or izinyanya (Xhosa) -- "are revered by tribal Africans as agents of protection, also of prophecy via the medium of the witchdoctor" (pp. 6, 7).

10 Maxhosa (Macbeth in Xhosa) was released in South Africa in 1974, inspired by the commercial success of the stage production of Umabatha (Macbeth in Zulu) in the early 1970s. Quince comments that the film "did not, however, receive widespread publicity. It was seen by few people, and achieved neither the financial success nor the popular acclaim of its Zulu progenitor" (p. 186).

11 This is also a common theme in education. Hartshorne finds that "the idea of Kingship, that golden thread running through so much of Shakespeare, [the "Bantu matriculant"] finds far easier to accept and understand than does his White counterpart [sic]" (p. 67).

12 This hit the news again most recently in the Cape Times, 13 January 1992 ('Equity Ban on Trial Today').

In connection with the cultural boycott, it is interesting to note that, in 1990, the SABC claimed that it was "confident that this counter-productive stance will soon disappear. It is precisely those audiences that could benefit most from such programmes that are affected most by the SABC's being refused access" (Annual Report, 1990, p. 5).

13 The Department of Home Affairs has been responsible for broadcasting since 1 September 1989. Prior to this, the SABC has been controlled by six different ministries:

Posts and Telegraphs:	1936 to 1970
National Education:	1970 to 1979
Posts and Telecommunications:	1979 to 1980
Foreign Affairs:	1980 to 1986
Minister in the Office of the State President,	
Administration and Broadcasting:	1986 to 1988
Information, Broadcasting and the Film Industry:	
	1988 to 1989

With classic understatement, the Viljoen Report points out that this relatively frequent switching "represents a chequered history of fragmented control over broadcasting" resulting in the absence of "a pool of broadcasting expertise in the South African civil service" (p. 4).

14 With its launching of CCV-TV, the ANC is reported to have accused the SABC of "simply proceeding with unilateral restructuring regardless of the political processes underway" (Cape Times, 'That Was the Week that Was', p. 15).

15 The fifteen-man group was comprised as follows:

Colin Adcock, former Managing Director of Toyota South Africa Ltd  
 Edgar Bold, independent television and film producer  
 Pieter Cronjé, representative of the SABC  
 Arrie de Beer, head of the Department of Communications, Potchefstroom University  
 Pieter de Lange, board member of Nasionale Pers  
 Andries Engelbrecht, director of the media office of the Department of Home Affairs  
 Charl Jooste, National Intelligence  
 Aggrey Klaaste, editor of The Sowetan newspaper  
 Brigadier Gerrit Murphy, director of telecommunications for the South African Defence Force  
 Cobus Stofberg, deputy general manager of M-Net  
 Piet Theron, general manager of Topsport, SABC  
 Boet van Loggerenberg, assistant general manager of International Services for the Post Office  
 Dries Venter, director for the independent homelands within the Department of Foreign Affairs  
 Christo Viljoen, chairman of the SABC  
 Ton Vosloo, chairman of M-Net and managing director of Nasionale Pers

16 At the same conference at which Butler read this paper, Professor I.D. MacCrone provides a wonderful example of how myths are given substance:

Our South Africanism is a state of mind whose roots lie deep in the century-long colonial period of English-speaking South Africa, particularly when we recall the achievements of and the contributions made by people of our kind, of whom the 1820 Settlers are the most dramatic example, from the very beginning of their history in South Africa

(p. 8).

17 Payi reports that the pilot textbook, Romeo and Juliet, "tested" during 1990 in three schools, a teachers' training college and a private academy in Johannesburg, received "very positive" feedback. The sequel, apparently, is to be Julius Caesar ('Making the Bard More User-Friendly', p. 15).

18 See also the review of Shakespeare Against Apartheid, by Laurence Wright.



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